

# IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

## Digital Repository

---

Retrospective Theses and Dissertations

Iowa State University Capstones, Theses and  
Dissertations

---

2007

## Immigrant identities in the rural Midwest, 1830-1925

Knut Oyangen  
*Iowa State University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/rtd>

 Part of the [Race and Ethnicity Commons](#), [Race, Ethnicity and Post-Colonial Studies Commons](#),  
and the [United States History Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Oyangen, Knut, "Immigrant identities in the rural Midwest, 1830-1925" (2007). *Retrospective Theses and Dissertations*. 15995.  
<https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/rtd/15995>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Iowa State University Capstones, Theses and Dissertations at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Retrospective Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact [digirep@iastate.edu](mailto:digirep@iastate.edu).

**Immigrant identities in the rural Midwest, 1830 - 1925**

by

**Knut Oyangen**

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

Major: Agricultural History and Rural Studies

Program of Study Committee:  
Pamela Riney-Kehrberg, Major Professor  
Christopher Curtis  
Andrejs Plakans  
Xiaoyuan Liu  
Charles Dobbs

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2007

Copyright © Knut Oyangen, 2007. All rights reserved.

UMI Number: 3274824



---

UMI Microform 3274824

Copyright 2007 by ProQuest Information and Learning Company.  
All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against  
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

---

ProQuest Information and Learning Company  
300 North Zeeb Road  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1. THE GASTRODYNAMICS OF DISPLACEMENT: IMMIGRATION, PLACE-MAKING, AND GUSTATORY IDENTITY	18
CHAPTER 2. LANDSCAPES IN THE MIND: PERCEPTION, PLACE, AND IDENTITY	62
CHAPTER 3. STATUS, CLASS, AND IDENTITY	97
CHAPTER 4. IMMIGRANTS AND AGRICULTURE: A CASE STUDY	143
CHAPTER 5. IMMIGRANTS AND POLITICAL REPRESENTATION: A CASE STUDY	176
CHAPTER 6. IMMIGRANTS AND POLITICAL MOBILIZATION	204
CONCLUSION	234
BIBLIOGRAPHY	241

## INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is a study of European immigrants in the rural Midwest during the era of mass migration.<sup>1</sup> Most such studies have focused on collective experiences. Some scholars have sought to generalize about a single nationality group, often with reference to some kind of organized activity such as religion, politics, or education. Others have examined small rural places dominated by one immigrant group, or explored assimilation and “Americanization” in an ethnically mixed settlement. These studies have expressed a shared desire to generalize, to find the “typical,” to identify the “community,” to scrutinize the organizations, structures, and cultural forms that tied people together as a collective. While recognizing the shortcomings of essentialism and showing deep concern for the ways in which the social world is constructed (at least in recent years), scholars have nevertheless directly or indirectly looked for “essences,” and for summary characterizations of the experiences of large groups, formulated in striking book titles. Thus rural German-speaking women were “contented among strangers” while Norwegians saw their “promise fulfilled.”<sup>2</sup>

The emphasis on collective experience is understandable. Recent scholars have rightfully sought to correct an earlier view of the frontier as a place of unrestrained individualism, as the historical record shows nineteenth century migrants and immigrants joining together to create a wide variety of formal and informal institutions. Furthermore,

---

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this dissertation, the “era of mass migration” may be loosely defined as the period from about 1830 to 1925. We are now in a second era of mass migration, but it obviously involves few Europeans migrating to the rural Midwest.

<sup>2</sup> Linda Schelbitzki Pickle, *Contented among Strangers: Rural German-Speaking Women and Their Families in the Nineteenth-Century Midwest* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996); Odd Lovoll, *The Promise Fulfilled: A Portrait of Norwegian Americans Today* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

students of immigration history have worked to discredit early work which placed an undue emphasis on the immigrant as an alienated, uprooted person adrift in a society of atomistic individualism and rapidly losing all connection with the old country and its culture.<sup>3</sup> As a multitude of studies have since demonstrated, many immigrants (and even their children and grandchildren) retained strong ties to specific ethnic cultures and attempted to maintain some connection with those cultures in American contexts. Some have gone so far as to label this a “transplantation” of culture from Europe to the United States. Although this dissertation will express some doubts about the theoretical possibilities and historical realities of such a transfer of cultural practice from one physical and social environment to another, the emphasis on community and cultural continuity has been a much needed corrective to the still common myth of a nineteenth-century “melting pot” which rapidly submerged cultural differences and made communal identities irrelevant.

But there remains a need to consider immigrants as individuals, simply because all the sensory, mental, and emotional experiences of human beings are encountered by the individual, however much these experiences are conditioned, modified, and interpreted by means of collective norms, discourses, and conceptual apparatuses. Focusing exclusively on the social determinants of immigrant experience reduces human differences to a set of social, cultural, and economic variables and implicitly denies the importance of the raw immediacy and unpredictable contingencies of individual

---

<sup>3</sup> The fullest expression of the old view was Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1951); the beginning of the new orthodoxy was Rudolph J. Vecoli, “Contadini in Chicago: A Critique of *The Uprooted*,” in *Journal of American History* 51 (1964): 404-417. The most comprehensive work taking “transplantation” as its central theme, although limited to the study of urban immigrants, is John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).

existence. Even in the nineteenth century, with the moral and intellectual discipline of the nation-state and the capitalist system converging to establish translocal norms of respectable conformity, human thought and behavior could not be reduced to simple formulas.<sup>4</sup> Individual life-stories and psychological idiosyncrasies continued to affect how people experienced and interpreted their existence and how they acted toward others. Historians and others dabbling in the study of the human world have perhaps been too eager to employ the tools of the modern surveillance state, to “see like a state,” as it were.<sup>5</sup> They have embraced the procedures of classifying, quantifying, and ordering people according to governance-relevant characteristics used to promote the rationalization of the bureaucratic state. Although helpful in producing many kinds of knowledge, these strategies may have led scholars in the humanities and social sciences to place too much emphasis on those elements of human experience that can easily be measured.

One of the primary aims of this dissertation is therefore to divert attention away from the institutional world of immigrants’ churches, schools, families, and communities, and to venture beyond the study of the preservation of highly visible collective traditions into the world of individual experience. Thus a more open-ended view of cultural adaptation can be adopted, as we try to imagine a post-migration reconfiguration of individual identities that despite the influence of overarching social imperatives varied considerably depending on context, personality, and life-stories. Only then can the seemingly trivial events of everyday life be re-instated to historical significance as the

---

<sup>4</sup> C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World: 1780 – 1914* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> The term is borrowed from James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998).

often traumatic or transformative experiences they were. This approach is not meant to imply that those scholars primarily concerned with institutional and communal features of immigrants' lives and identities have been in error. Instead, it is meant to complement previous work by utilizing a different perspective.

In order to fully explore the possibilities of this new perspective, I have chosen to study a wide range of phenomena related to the lives of immigrants in the rural Midwest in the age of mass migration from about 1830 to the 1920s. As the coverage of themes ranging from foodways to political representation indicates, the emphasis has been on arriving at a multifaceted end product rather than answering a single question in a cohesive, linear fashion. Nonetheless, several recurring themes contribute to joining the disparate parts into a whole.

One of the most prominent themes is what I choose to call displacement. This is a deliberate effort to interrogate the concepts of agency and reproduction so frequently employed in recent literature on the European immigration to America, and perhaps especially in literature on immigrant communities in the Midwest. Displacement instead suggests that many immigrants planned less and had less control over their personal trajectories in the new world than the literature often implies. As the German immigrant Carl Blümner put it in a letter to his mother: "so it is with man; fate sometimes knocks us about in the world."<sup>6</sup> This was a common sentiment. The evidence examined in this study suggests far more risk, arbitrariness, and contingency in how and why people emigrated, what they did when they arrived, and how their lives changed as an effect of the

---

<sup>6</sup> Carl Blümner, letter to his mother, 24 March, 1836, in *News from the Land of Freedom: German Immigrants Write Home*, ed. Walter Kamphoefner et al. (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), 99.



migration. Because of the great differences in economic and sociocultural contexts, immigrants' ability to simply continue their old lives in a new country were far more restricted than many scholars have assumed.

The term displacement, more commonly used in the case of refugees, also points to the realities of the sending context. Many emigrants left Europe because of economic and political circumstances they personally could do very little to control, and only partially even understood. Take, for example, the great emigration from southwestern Germany in 1817, an event that foreshadowed and in some ways laid the foundation for the later mass migration. The proximate cause of this event was the disastrous crop failure in Baden and Württemberg in 1816, due to a summer with highly unusual weather. We now know that this abrupt climate change was the result of a major volcanic eruption in Java the previous year. However, the more than 30,000 emigrants who left the Upper Rhine for the United States, the Russian Caucasus, and elsewhere, knew nothing about that; they knew only food shortages, lack of opportunity, and oppressive government.<sup>7</sup>

Once immigrants arrived in the United States, their displacement continued. Life could not go on as before. In the new country, laws, government institutions, markets, values, and norms were different. So was the language, for most people, as well as the land from which most immigrants hoped to make a living. Immigrants embraced some changes, and rejected some aspects of American life that they thought unpalatable. More than anything, they mixed old and new into new cultural expressions and new identities, simultaneously participating in and resisting their own displacement. Through the choices they were able to make within the confines of the new context, they made places for

---

<sup>7</sup> Klaus Bade, *Migration in European History* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2003), 87.

themselves in America, both literally and figuratively. That place-making work is a second recurring theme in this dissertation.

A third theme is the forging of identities in the immigrant context. Most writers on this topic have been interested in the formation of collective ethnic identities. Here, the emphasis is more on the continuous process of relating individual selves to others, to new contexts, and a life-history in order to create a meaningful narrative of one's life capable of conferring meaning across the great fissure of the transatlantic migration. When, in 1998, a mood of crisis swept over the Immigration History Society, it changed its name to the Immigration and Ethnic History Society.<sup>8</sup> One is tempted to see this as an expression of the all too common assumption that being an immigrant is primarily about being "ethnic," which in turn may reflect both the receiving society's obsession with questions of assimilation and the politically correct trend of neo-essentialism and victimology. In reality, many factors other than ethnic identity were important to the self-understanding of immigrants, and this work is meant to reflect that fact.

Although a few of the immigrants whose experiences I have studied were in a sense more like travelers or sojourners than true immigrants, the meaning of the term "immigrant" is relatively straightforward. We are dealing with people who left Europe and came to America for an extended period of time. The meaning of the term "rural Midwest" is by contrast rather vague. There are great difficulties involved in capturing exactly what we mean when we say that a location is "rural."<sup>9</sup> We may choose to go by the Census Bureau definition of a rural place as one with less than 2,500 inhabitants, but

---

<sup>8</sup> Donna Gabaccia, "Ins and Outs: Who is an Immigrant Historian?" in *Journal of American Ethnic History* 18 (1999): 126.

<sup>9</sup> See Pamela Riney-Kehrberg, "New Directions in Rural History," in *Agricultural History* 81 (2007): 155-158.

that is in a sense putting the cart before the horse. The census definition of what is rural is an operationalization, a practical solution to the problem of estimating the magnitude of a phenomenon we already have some idea about in our minds. To in turn define rural by the census definition is thus tautological.<sup>10</sup> However, what is rural can probably not be defined any more precisely with reference to other criteria, either. To some extent, rurality is like obscenity: it is hard to define, but we know it when we see it. That is more or the less the approach I have taken in this study.

Much of the same could be said for the term “Midwest.” Since the name “Middle West” did not come into use until the late nineteenth century, and then meant something rather different than what it is usually taken to mean today, it is hardly a razor-sharp analytical tool.<sup>11</sup> For this study, I have examined evidence from twelve states: Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, and the Dakotas. This does not mean to imply that the immigrant experience was “the same” throughout all twelve states. There was plenty of variety: Missouri had slavery, the westernmost states had the issue of aridity affecting agriculture, and so on. Instead, this conventional twelve-state definition was used to set a boundary for the scope of the dissertation.

The variety in historical development across the region justifies the rather limited attention paid to chronology in this study. Although the societal changes that took place

---

<sup>10</sup> Thus it is also to some extent meaningless to say, as rural historians often do, that the United States had become a predominantly urban country in 1920 because the Census showed that 51.4 percent of the population lived in locations with populations higher than 2,500. If we instead chose 8,000 inhabitants as our cut-off point, we could say that the United States was still predominantly rural in 1920, with the urban population amounting to only 43.8 percent of the whole. Similarly, we could choose a number lower than 2,500 and claim an earlier date for the triumph of urbanization

<sup>11</sup> James R. Shortridge, *The Middle West: Its Meaning in American Culture* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989).

in the United States in the nineteenth and early twentieth century greatly affected immigrant experiences, conventional historiographical periodization tends to collide with an alternative chronological structure: that of the frontier. In rural areas, the time that had passed since other whites first started settling in the area had a decisive impact on the economic and social situation immigrants faced. If we resort to another Census Bureau convention and define the “frontier” as an area with less than 2.5 person per square mile, then Ohio passed out of the frontier stage in the first decade of the nineteenth century, Indiana in the 1810s, Illinois in the 1820s, Missouri and Michigan in the 1830s, Wisconsin and Iowa in the 1840s, Minnesota and Kansas in the 1860s, Nebraska in the 1870s, and North and South Dakota in the 1880s. South Dakota in 1920 had a population density of 8.3 persons per square mile, compared to 141.4 for Ohio. The Dakotas in the 1890s were in many ways more similar to Ohio half a century earlier than to late-nineteenth-century Ohio.<sup>12</sup>

The immigration to the rural Midwest was enormous. By 1920, about one-third of the population of the United States lived in the Midwest, and almost half of Midwesterners lived in rural areas (if we follow the conventional census definition). About one-third of those rural dwellers were of foreign stock, i. e., either they or at least

---

<sup>12</sup> Frontier politics in the infancy of a territory or state, for example, tended to share many of the same traits regardless of time period. Compare Robert P. Wilkins, “Alexander McKenzie and the Politics of Bossim,” in *The North Dakota Political Tradition*, ed. Thomas Howard (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1981), 3-39, with Thomas Perkins Abernathy, *From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1932); or S. Charles Bolton, *Territorial Ambition: Land and Society in Arkansas, 1800 – 1840* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1993).

one of their parents had been born in a different country.<sup>13</sup> In states such as Minnesota and Wisconsin a clear majority of the rural population was of foreign stock.

Among the 5.4 million people of foreign stock in the rural Midwest in 1920, about 1.8 million were German and another 1.1 million were Scandinavian (Norwegian, Swedish, or Danish). Most of the individual immigrants encountered in this study were either German or Scandinavian, with Swiss and Dutch individuals thrown in occasionally. This kind of selectivity stems from the availability of sources of different kinds, the limitations of my language skills, and once again, the desire to limit the scope of the dissertation to manageable proportions. We should of course always be reluctant to assume that the experiences of one group is representative of the experiences of other groups, however, this study is primarily about individuals, not groups. That some groups did have collective patterns of behavior that distinguished them from others in some areas will become evident in the chapters on political representation and mobilization.

Why so many people left Europe for the United States in this time period remains a complicated question. The numbers of emigrants varied considerably from country to country, from region to region, and even from village to village within one region. The immigrants themselves rarely left lucid explanations of why they ended up leaving. As historian Mack Walker put it, migrants “were not much concerned with communication, with introspection, or with orderliness of thought and decision. And when they do tell us something, it is quite commonly at odds with what the statistics tell us.”<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> *Fourteenth Census of the United States: Population, 1920* (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1921), Table 20, 81-83. Considering what was said about “seeing like a state” above, there is of course a certain irony to the reliance on census data in this section.

<sup>14</sup> Mack Walker, *Germany and the Emigration, 1816 – 1885* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964), 43.

In the nineteenth century, Europe underwent social and economic transformations which encouraged many displaced or discouraged rural dwellers to emigrate. Developments such as enclosure, mechanization, improvements in transportation, and the abolition of serfdom involved more people in a more purely capitalist agriculture, often disrupting communal patterns of living while combining with population growth to reduce the possibility of landownership. Some of the people who left were lower middle class people who were trying to run a small, marginally viable farm, workshop, or business, and hit up against the vagaries of harvests, industrialization, and liberalization of trade. Peasants, artisans, and shopkeepers might have skills and property, but faced the prospect of either losing their property or their skills becoming redundant – “they were people who had something to lose and were losing it.”<sup>15</sup> Commercialization and mechanization of agriculture, as well as increasing competition from distant producers of agricultural and factory-made goods, made such people downwardly mobile. High rates of population growth meant that, depending on inheritance laws, either more and more rural people were landless, or the landowning peasants owned land in smaller and smaller pieces. The pressure on the land was so great that in some places, entire villages joined together to sell all public and private property to a wealthy nobleman, and then jointly emigrated to the United States.

Many of those who emigrated from Europe had lived in miserable conditions all their lives. Monika Blaschke has provided a vivid description of the circumstances of rural people in Mecklenburg, a principality from which a large proportion of the population emigrated in the nineteenth century. The dukes of Schwerin and Strelitz

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 47.

owned 40 percent of the land there, and lesser nobles owned most of the remainder. Until 1879, manorial lords had both police power and patrimonial jurisdiction on their estates, allowing them almost absolute rule. Because of domicile laws and the guild system, there was virtually no possibility of moving elsewhere in Mecklenburg or taking up a trade. Farmhands and maids worked fourteen hour days with little to show for it, and only a few days off each year. The right to marry was severely restricted, and in some places illegitimate births became the norm. When the first few emigrants began to send letters home from America, working people saved up their meager wages or sold everything they had to secure passage to a potentially brighter future.<sup>16</sup>

Some historians have seen the urge to emigrate as a reflection of a change in outlook. Whereas in the early modern period, societal stability had been the norm, Europeans in the nineteenth century (following the French Revolution) envisioned states and societies as dynamic entities where mobility was possible.<sup>17</sup> In a slightly different formulation, there had been a “secularization of hope,” a recognition that one could improve one’s condition in *this* life.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the decision to emigrate involved a sense of agency. On the other hand, there were many who had little or no influence in such decisions and nevertheless had to come along (children, and in many cases young adults and married women). Even those who made their own decisions often made those decisions because of circumstances in their lives that were far beyond their own control.

---

<sup>16</sup> Monika Blaschke, “No Way but Out: German Women in Mecklenburg,” in *Peasant Maids – City Women: From the European Countryside to Urban America*, ed. Christiane Harzig (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 25-56.

<sup>17</sup> Harald Kleinschmidt, *People on the Move: Attitudes toward and Perceptions of Migration in Medieval and Modern Europe* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2003), 191-192.

<sup>18</sup> Dirk Hoerder, “From Dreams to Possibilities: The Secularization of Hope and the Quest for Independence,” in D. Hoerder & H. Rössler, *Distant Magnets: Expectations and Realities in the Immigrant Experience, 1840 – 1930* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1993), 2.

Economic changes, famine, war, religious persecution, and conscription could force a choice between stark alternatives. In this sense, many immigrants must have felt a sense of displacement even before they arrived in the United States.

They continued to feel that dislocation and experience irresistible change on the other side of the Atlantic. As Klaus Bade has written, “for many, emigration represented precisely that step into modernity that they had wanted to avoid by going overseas.”<sup>19</sup> Even for a group with strong particularistic traditions and an intense sense of community such as the Mennonites, encountering new contexts meant “new articulation of social boundaries, our concepts of community, new strategies of household reproduction, new associations with neighboring groups, and new ways of approaching markets.”<sup>20</sup>

Scholars of the transplantationist school have tended to downplay the extent of cultural and behavioral change associated with migration. In *From Peasants to Farmers*, Jon Gjerde studied Norwegian immigrants from Balestrand, and found that their emigration patterns “were powerfully directed by ties of kin and friendship.”<sup>21</sup> The result was a chain migration where people from the sending community settled together in the receiving society. Thus arose relatively homogeneous settlements “dominated by single culture groups that could retain patterns of speech and culture fairly easily.”<sup>22</sup> Walter Kamphoefner, too, found that German immigrants usually settled in homogeneous settlements with their roots in European communities. As a result, “for settlers in rural

---

<sup>19</sup> Bade, *Migration in European History*, 103.

<sup>20</sup> Royden Loewen, *Hidden Worlds: Revisiting the Mennonite Migrants of the 1870s* (North Newton, Kan.: Bethel College, 2001), 5-6.

<sup>21</sup> Jon Gjerde, *From Peasants to Farmers: The Migration from Balestrand, Norway, to the Upper Middle West* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 233.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.



areas, emigration was less an uprooting than a transplanting.”<sup>23</sup> Robert Ostergren even found that immigrants from Rättvik in Sweden were more able to resist or isolate themselves from new trends disrupting traditional relationships than their compatriots back home.<sup>24</sup>

When the findings in this study diverge from those of the transplantationist school in some ways, it is partially because the methodological and theoretical approach I have taken is quite different. My interest has been in exploring the destinies of individual immigrants and discovering how they interpreted their own experiences in the United States. There is no meticulous retracing of migration chains and the development of single communities in this work. Although many community studies have contributed greatly to our knowledge about how immigrants lived in the United States, the emphasis on continuous residence tends to neglect the fact that nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century immigrants, like others in America, were highly mobile.<sup>25</sup> To some extent, this may reflect that permanent settlers are often considered somehow “better” than frequent movers by rural people, and by extension, rural historians. When I began reading some of the thousands of extant letters left behind by immigrants, I was struck by how frequently they moved, changed their jobs, and how they adapted to major changes in their circumstances with little resistance or even reflection. Although I have maintained an effort not to generalize too much from individual sources throughout this study, I feel

---

<sup>23</sup> Walter Kamphoefner, *The Westfalians: From Germany to Missouri* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), 70-105, quote on p. 105.

<sup>24</sup> Robert Ostergren, *A Community Transplanted: The Trans-Atlantic Experience of a Swedish Immigrant Settlement in the Upper Middle West, 1835 – 1915* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), 328.

<sup>25</sup> Among the most significant community studies dealing with immigrant settlements are Jane Marie Pederson, *Between Memory and Reality: Family and Community in Rural Wisconsin, 1870 – 1970* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992); and Carol K. Coburn, *Life at Four Corners: Religion, Gender, and Education in a German-Lutheran Community, 1868 – 1945* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992).

confident that immigrants experienced more change more often and with less trepidation than what we have usually thought. They considered some changes good, others bad, and unsurprisingly different people responded to change in different ways. There was a tendency for those from a lower station in the old country to accept change more readily than their former superiors. However, personality and individual life-histories also affected how people dealt with change and how they maintained a sense of self in new and challenging situations

The first chapter of this dissertation considers the way immigrants dealt with a new world of food. Although immigrants often discussed the significance of eating (and drinking) differently in their writings, few historians have taken an interest in this aspect of immigrant experience. Food is more than sustenance, and it is also more than “cultural tradition.” The conscious creation of an illusion of cultural continuity by serving traditional meals on holidays did not change the fact that many immigrants had to change their everyday diets dramatically after arriving in the United States. Thus food became a daily reminder of the forced adaptation transatlantic immigration usually entailed. However, many immigrants also rejoiced in the abundance of rich foods American prosperity allowed them to consume on a daily basis.

The second chapter describes encounters between European immigrants and Midwestern landscapes. To most, the natural environment was primarily “land” in the agricultural sense, a commodity or investment that translated into monetary gain and facilitated a certain way of living and producing. But for the immigration historian, the way that landscape perception interacted with personal identity can be even more interesting. In nineteenth century Europe, nationalist and Romantic imagery constructed

national landscapes that connected ideas of nationality, territory, and natural beauty. This ideology identified groups of people with the landscapes that supposedly had defined them, and in turn, some Europeans made a specific relationship to distinctive natural features part of their new, national identities. Thus the second chapter deals with the ways in which immigrants negotiated the transition from one natural setting to another, and how their interaction with new landscapes forced changes of habit and reconsiderations of identity. It suggests that even highly subjective experience such as observing one's surroundings could be structured by collective norms and ideals, but that those experiences nevertheless often were interpreted primarily in terms of a life-story.

The third chapter deals with matters of status, class, and ethnic identity. This chapter turns conventional historiography on its head by studying, among other things, the prejudices immigrants held against the native-born, rather than the other way around. It explores how immigrants employed ethnic categorization to define selves and others, and the preference they indisputably had for being among people of their own kind. In considering the status of immigrants in the rural Midwest, I focus on how immigrants compared their lives in America with the conditions they knew from Europe. Whereas American historians are typically concerned with the question of comparing the economic success and social status of immigrants with those of native-born Americans, this was hardly ever the perspective of the immigrants themselves. Nor was their interpretation of social status usually restricted by historians' notion of an occupational ladder or, in agriculture, a ladder of tenure. To many immigrants, the most important aspect of social status was the treatment and recognition they were afforded in everyday life.

In the fourth chapter, a more conventional question is revisited: did European immigrants run their farms differently? The considerable historiography on this topic is examined, and a small-scale case study of an Iowa county is used primarily to explore the problematic nature of the methodologies employed by some leading scholars. The case of agricultural adaptation is of special interest because it is so obvious that farming had to be different in United States, yet so difficult for historians to let go of the notion that European peasants brought their farm practices with them across the Atlantic.

While the first four chapters exhibit a gradual shift from cultural to social and economic history, the last two deal with politics. A system of representative government such as the American involves a democratic element in participation and what we may call an aristocratic element in selection. Those who are elected are thought to be “better” in some significant way than other potential officeholders, and as a consequence, studying the characteristics of those who were elected can tell us something about the nature of the society that elected them. The fifth chapter examines the social characteristics of the political elite in Minnesota over a thirty-year period, with special emphasis on ethnic origins.

The sixth and final chapter examines the way ethnic groups could be mobilized to achieve specific electoral outcomes, and the ways in which ethnic identities interacted with party identities and changing views of the government’s role in society. More specifically, the chapter describes the role Scandinavian Republicans with strong progressive views played in the electoral politics of the early twentieth century. By mobilizing to elect progressive alternatives to conservative Republicans, they changed the character of politics in several states in the region. However, voting and other forms

of political activity are social performances which contain meaning in and by themselves, relatively independent of electoral and policy outcomes, and it is argued that pride and status anxiety can engage voters just as much as economic and other more “proper” political concerns.

Although the sources and methods used in the last three chapters are very different from those applied in the first three, all six chapters in some way address the issues of place-making and identity. Everything from cooking to voting could be a way of making a place for oneself in a new world, and to reconstitute the self in a new context. Looking at how individuals encountered their new worlds and how they used those worlds to define their own identities contributes to an understanding of immigrant life that is less fixated on organized, public expressions of identity intended to standardize identity and convey specific messages to outsiders. It reveals that much of the adaptation and adjustment that took place as immigrants faced their new existence was of a more spontaneous, personal, and contingent nature than historians have recognized.

## 1: THE GASTRODYNAMICS OF DISPLACEMENT: IMMIGRATION, PLACE-MAKING, AND GUSTATORY IDENTITY

The act of eating connects the universal, the social, and the individual. All humans must eat, all humans follow certain group norms for eating, and every human eater fulfills the needs of a specific organism by ingesting food. According to the sociologist Georg Simmel, eating is a uniquely individualistic activity: you can read what I have read, or see what I have seen, but you cannot eat what I have eaten.<sup>26</sup> But as Simmel also pointed out, it is exactly this individualistic nature of eating that makes it all the more susceptible to the social regulations which transform individual needs into a social form.<sup>27</sup> Incorporation, the act of allowing food into the body, potentially involves an anxious encounter between self and world, known and unknown. The rules of a food system relieve our anxiety; they sanction our behavior by providing something from nature with the imprint of culture. Biology determines that we must eat, culture regulates what and how we eat.<sup>28</sup>

The tension between individual needs and cultural imperatives inherent in any food event makes the study of immigrants' experiences with food particularly intriguing.<sup>29</sup> The newly arrived immigrant was immediately faced with new opportunities and restraints in the realm of food. Due to the sheer complexity of any food system,

---

<sup>26</sup> Georg Simmel, "The Sociology of the Meal," [1910], translated and reprinted in *Food & Foodways* 5 (1994): 345-350. Although this comparison does not necessarily stand up to rigorous analysis at every level, it is obviously true in plain language terms and should be seen as more than simply a rhetorical device.

<sup>27</sup> "Form" in this instance means what is now often called an "institution," a set of principles of social organization and regulation pertinent to a specific sphere of life.

<sup>28</sup> Claude Fischler, "Food, Self, and Identity," *Social Science Information* 27 (1988): 275-292.

<sup>29</sup> The term "food event" is used in a general sense about any human food behavior, whereas only a "structured" event counts as a meal. Mary Douglas, *In the Active Voice* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), 90-91.

including the availability of foodstuffs, the proper equipment and skills needed to prepare food “correctly,” and the accepted circumstances of eating, all immigrants had to adapt or adjust in some way to new culinary realities. Descendants of immigrants tend to believe that their ancestors reproduced the culture of their homelands by cooking traditional dishes. In reality, the wholesale transplantation of food culture was impossible, and not only because of matters of expense, practicality, and convenience. The truly insurmountable obstacle was the complex relationship between food and the larger sociocultural context. Since food habits have meaning only in relation to a sociocultural totality, preparing and consuming the same foods in a new context is as much an act of innovation, assertion, and transformation as it is an act of reproducing tradition. Indeed, what passed for the unconscious reproduction of tradition was often a conscious performance of identity. To examine individual immigrants’ perceptions, conceptions, and emotional responses to food and food-related experiences that by necessity collided with prior experience and preconceived notions thus becomes an integral part of analyzing the adaptive behavior of a displaced immigrant subject.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Simone Cinotto, “Leonardo Covello, the Covello Papers, and the History of Eating Habits among Italian Immigrants in New York,” *Journal of American History* 91 (2004): 497-521; Tracy Poe, “The Labour and Leisure of Food Production as a Mode of Ethnic Identity Building among Italians in Chicago, 1890 – 1940,” *Rethinking History* 5 (2001): 131-148; Euridice Charon Cordona, “Re-Encountering Cuban Tastes in Australia,” *Australian Journal of Anthropology* 15 (2004): 40-53; Hasia R. Diner, *Hungering for America: Italian, Irish, and Jewish Foodways in the Age of Migration* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001); M. S. A. Rao, “Conservatism and Change in Food Habits among the Migrants in India: A Study in Gastrodynamics,” in *Food, Society, and Culture*, ed. R. S. Khare & Rao (Durham, N. C.: Carolina Academic Press, 1986), 121-140; Linda Keller Brown & Kay Mussell, “Introduction,” in *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States: The Performance of Group Identity*, ed. Brown & Mussell (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 3-15; Susan Kalcik, “Ethnic Foodways in America: Symbol and the Performance of Identity,” in Brown & Mussell, *Ethnic and Regional Foodways*, 37-65; Douglas, *In the Active Voice*, 100-101; E. N. Anderson, *Everyone Eats: Understanding Food and Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Krishnendu Ray, *The Migrant’s Table: Meals and Memories in Bengali-American Households* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004); Jitsuiichi Masuoka, “Changing Food Habits of the Japanese in Hawaii,” *American Sociological Review* 10 (1945), 759-765.

Although scholars have studied the production, distribution, processing, and preparation of food from the perspectives of economic, labor, and women's history, the consumption of food has received relatively little attention from historians. Works by Harvey Levenstein, Donna Gabaccia, and Hasia Diner have begun to establish American food history as a more prominent field of study, but the historical literature is still rather limited compared to that produced in several other disciplines.<sup>31</sup> Perhaps it is true, as Mary Douglas suggested, that it is "more convenient for us to take a veterinary surgeon's view of food as animal feed, to think of it as mere bodily input, than to recognize its great symbolic force."<sup>32</sup> After all, to most scholars food evokes notions of "triviality and guilt."<sup>33</sup> Maybe the reluctance to recognize the centrality of food in our own lives is why experimental psychologists, who often study other animals, and anthropologists, who study strange people in foreign lands, have been more daring in exploring the psychological and symbolic meanings of food. My decision to write about immigrants and food derives primarily from the abundant evidence of food's significance in the primary sources, however, many other immigration historians have read these or similar sources without finding food consumption important enough to write about. Thus this chapter begins with a general exploration of the significance of food in human culture, structured as an overview of the relevant findings of psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists.

---

<sup>31</sup> Harvey Levenstein, *Revolution at the Table: The Transformation of the American Diet* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); idem, *Paradox of Plenty: The Social History of Eating in Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Donna R. Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998); Diner, *Hungering for America*.

<sup>32</sup> Douglas, *In the Active Voice*, 123.

<sup>33</sup> Roland Barthes, "Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption," [1961], in Elborg Forster and Robert Forster, *European Diet from Pre-Industrial to Modern Times* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 48.



Food “identifies and symbolizes who we are,”<sup>34</sup> is “imbued with meaning,”<sup>35</sup> and “mediates body and mind.”<sup>36</sup> Ultimately our foodways constitute “a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behavior.”<sup>37</sup> Thus, when we go beyond the biological notion of feeding, we find in food and food habits ways of understanding and identifying ourselves and others, and ways of communicating our desires, beliefs, and claims to status. Food places us in time, space, and social hierarchies. But to confine the study of food to the analysis of symbols and meanings is to go too far. We must, as Claude Fischler has convincingly argued, seek an “integrative” approach that recognizes both the biological and the social aspects of eating.<sup>38</sup>

A first step toward understanding the social implications of biology as it relates to food has been taken by psychologists. Early scholars focused on physiological explanations, positing a homeostasis theory which assumed that the body seeks to maintain a stable state based on hunger and satiety cues. Eventually, however, it became clear that the physiological responses of both animals and humans depend on the prior experiences of each individual. In other words, eating is a learning process. Experiments have demonstrated that animals learn food preferences and feeding behavior from conspecifics in a variety of ways, and humans are not fundamentally different in this regard. Notwithstanding the mediating role of genetic predisposition, children learn to enjoy foods served in positive contexts and dislike foods with negative social

---

<sup>34</sup> Millie Rahn, “Laying a Place at the Table: Creating Public Foodways Models from Scratch,” *Journal of American Folklore* 119 (2006), 33.

<sup>35</sup> Paul Rozin, “Sociocultural Influences on Human Food Selection,” in *Why We Eat What We Eat: The Psychology of Eating*, ed. Elizabeth D. Capaldi (Washington, D. C.: American Psychological Association, 1996), 235.

<sup>36</sup> Khare & Rao, “Introduction,” in Khare & Rao, *Food, Society, and Culture*, 6.

<sup>37</sup> Barthes, “Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption,” 50.

<sup>38</sup> Fischler, “Food, Self, and Identity,” 275-277.

connotations – even our seemingly “natural” feelings of disgust and repulsion are to an extent culturally conditioned.<sup>39</sup>

Food habits, then, are learned. But the process of food learning is premised on the biological fact of what psychologists call “the omnivore’s paradox.” Human beings are omnivore-generalists, meaning that the number of potential foods is high. Thus we exhibit neophilia, a persistent desire to add new foods to our culinary repertoire. At the same time, however, we also suffer from neophobia, a reluctance or skepticism toward new foods shared by our fellow omnivores, the rats, who in experiments use sophisticated strategies to deal with the danger of toxicity. In the case of human beings, culturally defined questions of acceptability come into play as well. During the Korean War, some American prisoners of war died of malnutrition not because they were fed too little, but because they refused to adjust to eating unfamiliar foods. Similarly, although much has been made of early European colonists’ learning from American Indian foodways, they often suffered hunger and privation amidst potential aliments that they failed to define as food.<sup>40</sup> In the case of immigrants more generally, the significance of food learning and the ambiguity toward new foods inherent in omnivore psychology should be obvious. With food, “familiarity breeds liking rather than contempt.”<sup>41</sup> Thus social and spatial

---

<sup>39</sup> Capaldi, “Introduction,” in idem, *Why We Eat What We Eat*, 3-9; idem, “Conditioned Food Preferences,” in idem, *Why We Eat What We Eat*, 53-80; L. L. Birch & J. A. Fisher, “The Role of Experience in the Development of Children’s Eating Behavior,” in Capaldi, *Why We Eat What We Eat*, 130; Rozin, “Sociocultural Influences on Human Food Selection,” 233-263; Bennett G. Galef, Jr., “Social Influences on Food Preference and Feeding Behaviors of Vertebrates,” in Capaldi, *Why We Eat What We Eat*, 207-231; Bernard Lyman, *A Psychology of Food: More than a Matter of Taste* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1989); A. W. Logue, *The Psychology of Eating and Drinking: An Introduction*, second ed. (New York: W. H. Freeman, 1991).

<sup>40</sup> An “aliment” being an item defined as edible within a given culture. A. Beardsworth & T. Keil, *Sociology on the Menu: An Invitation to the Study of Food and Society* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 67.

<sup>41</sup> Lyman, *A Psychology of Food*, 24.

displacement inescapably poses a potential conflict between an altered gastronomical reality and the inertia of learned food habits.<sup>42</sup>

The psychological concepts of food learning and the omnivore's paradox can be supplemented by insights from sociology and anthropology. Simmel, who wrote his short essay on the sociology of the meal as early as 1910, clearly recognized the social character of eating and the social implications of the various "rules" that structure a meal. Since eating has the potential of being a dangerously individualistic, egotistical affair, rules for appropriate timing, order, and gestures are necessary to impress the stamp of culture upon each food event. Thus Simmel argued that conversation is necessary to lift the meal to the highest aesthetic order, because social interaction disguises the bodily need for sustenance as the foundation of eating. Similarly, the intervention of knife and fork between food and mouth creates a dignified distance between nature and civilization.<sup>43</sup>

Unfortunately, Simmel's incisive writings were something of a false start, as sociologists generally ignored food-related issues until relatively recently.<sup>44</sup> Throughout the twentieth century, anthropologists showed far greater interest in this topic, especially in the food habits of "primitive" people. The most ambitious attempt to understand how

---

<sup>42</sup> J. A. Mennella & G. K. Beauchamp, "The Early Development of Human Flavor Preferences," in Capaldi, *Why We Eat What We Eat*, 103-104; Birch & Fisher, "The Role of Experience," 131; Rozin, "Sociocultural Influences," 237; Logue, *The Psychology of Eating and Drinking*, 98-111; Fischler, "Food, Self, and Identity," 277-278; Levenstein, *Revolution at the Table*, vii, 4; Mark McWilliams, "Distant Tables: Food and the Novel in Early America," *Early American Literature* 38 (2003), 365-366; Beardsworth & Keil, *Sociology on the Menu*, 51-52; Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat*, 19-20. See also Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present* (New York: Blackwell, 1985), 1-5.

<sup>43</sup> Simmel, "The Sociology of the Meal."

<sup>44</sup> As recently as 1996, the sociology of food was an "emerging field," with psychology and anthropology "far ahead." Wm. Alex McIntosh, *Sociologies of Food and Nutrition* (New York: Plenum Press, 1996), 1, 9; see also Ray, *The Migrant's Table*, 5.

people relate to food and how ideas about food reveal truths about society was Claude Levi-Strauss's massive *Mythology* trilogy.<sup>45</sup>

In the structuralism of Levi-Strauss, the human mind is conceived as a “thing among things,” defined by “constraining structures” which unconsciously manifest themselves throughout the cultural variations observed in human societies.<sup>46</sup> Levi-Strauss was greatly influenced by structural linguistics, which emphasized the unconscious over the conscious and the relationship between terms rather than the qualities of the terms as such. He argued that other social phenomena are “of the same type” as linguistic phenomena, i. e., they are based on general, but implicit (unconscious) laws expressed in symbolic systems.<sup>47</sup> Based on his studies of native myths in the Americas, Levi-Strauss concluded that food and cooking have a special significance among all social phenomena. Cooking, “a truly universal form of human activity” (and thus similar to language) provides structural oppositions that can be used to describe all human attributes.<sup>48</sup> Such oppositions exist, for example, in the “culinary triangle” between the raw, which is natural and “unmarked,” the cooked, which is the product of a cultural transformation, and the rotted, which is the product of a natural transformation. Yet, as Levi-Strauss admitted, the specific interpretations of these categories vary from culture to culture,

---

<sup>45</sup> Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*, trans. J. Weightman & D. Weightman (New York: Harper & Row, 1967 [1964]); idem, *From Honey to Ashes*, trans. Weightman & Weightman (New York: Harper & Row, 1973 [1966]); idem, *The Origin of Table Manners*, trans. Weightman & Weightman (New York: Harper & Row, 1978 [1968]).

<sup>46</sup> Idem, *The Raw and the Cooked*, 10.

<sup>47</sup> Idem, *Structural Anthropology*, trans. C. Jacobsen & B. G. Schoepf (New York: Basic Books, 1963 [1958]), 31-51, quote on p. 34.

<sup>48</sup> Idem, “The Culinary Triangle,” in C. Counihan \* P. Van Esterik, *Food and Culture: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 28; idem, *The Raw and the Cooked*, 164.

creating “concrete” triangles that somehow relate to the triangle in the abstract. Through cooking, a society “unconsciously translates its structure” or reveals its contradictions.<sup>49</sup>

Whereas Simmel had described the normative structuring of a meal in concrete terms and with special reference to his own time, place, and class, Levi-Strauss cast a wider net and sought to show that all people think about food in related ways (as a kind of language) and that the symbolism of food reveals the underlying structures of society (which, although variable, in turn reflect the deep structures of the human mind). Both emphasized the imposition of culture upon natural processes through culturally defined rules. In general, we follow these rules unconsciously, with no explicit analysis of their meanings; as products of socialization, they form part of the individual’s habitus. In “Deciphering a Meal,” Mary Douglas tried to make these rules explicit. Accusing Levi-Strauss of mostly “orbiting in rarefied space,” she focused instead on the rules for meals in her own household.<sup>50</sup> As this experiment showed, the implicit rules regulating even a simple meal are almost infinitely complex. Judith Goode and colleagues went further, pressing beyond the rules regulating a single meal to a multi-level analysis of food items, recipes, meal formats, and meal cycles, all structured by certain rules and all important to the culinary totality of a household. In the context of transnational migration, this means that a proper comparative analysis of food culture at the point of origin and the point of

---

<sup>49</sup> Idem, “The Culinary Triangle,” idem, *The Origins of Table Manners*, 478-495. For a critique of Levi-Strauss, see Jack Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine, and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 17-29.

<sup>50</sup> Douglas, “Deciphering a Meal,” in Counihan & Van Esterik, *Food and Culture*, 36-54, quote on p. 37.

residence could involve comparison of foods selected, methods and means of preparation, the organization and timing of meals, or the distribution of meals over a weekly cycle.<sup>51</sup>

Today, many scholars consider the structuralism of Levi-Strauss to be outdated. Nevertheless, the significance of food-related behavior as a way of expressing and communicating about social structure continues to be recognized. Largely this is due to sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's landmark work *Distinction*, which discussed the relationship between taste and class structures in France. According to Bourdieu, the food habits of working class people were fundamentally different from middle class food culture. Whereas manual workers ate and drank together, consuming ample amounts of hearty foods in a convivial atmosphere, members of the bourgeoisie spent less of their money on food and more on health, beauty, and fashion. Thus the large body, brute manners, and "temporal immanentism" of the workingman contrasted with the delicate body and deferred gratification of the clerk or school teacher. In short, workers' food habits emphasized being and doing in the here and now, while the bourgeoisie (as in other aesthetic fields) escaped into forms, appearances, and better futures.<sup>52</sup>

*Distinction* suggested that differences in food behavior reveal significant facts about differences within societies. In Bourdieu's work, class differences were paramount. Others have examined the way gender differences are expressed in food behavior, suggesting that food roles "express," "reflect," and "enforce" the patriarchal

---

<sup>51</sup> Judith Goode et al., "A Framework for the Analysis of Continuity and Change in Shared Sociocultural Rules for Food Use: The Italian-American Pattern," in Brown & Mussell, *Ethnic and Regional Foodways*, 66-88. See also Douglas, "Standard Social Uses of Food: Introduction," in *Food in the Social Order: Studies of Food and Festivities in Three American Communities* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1984).

<sup>52</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), 179-201.

subordination of women to men.<sup>53</sup> In the context of immigrants arriving in the nineteenth-century rural Midwest, a pluralistic setting with high social and geographical mobility, differences related to ethnicity become important as well. In addition, the context of transnational migration requires greater attention to change and agency than what is generally afforded by structural analysis. Bourdieu assumed that “cultural needs are the product of upbringing and education,”<sup>54</sup> but it is clear that an individual in certain circumstances can claim a new identity by adopting specific cultural strategies. After all, eating is “a way of presenting ourselves to others,”<sup>55</sup> and the immigrant’s America was a land of reinvention.

If we accept that food items become cultural items through the workings of a set of rules (a language, or grammar) that are unconsciously adopted by individuals within a physical and social space, whose food roles and behavior in turn reflect the social structure of a society and the differences within it, we can move on to ask how this process affects the gastrodynamics of migration – in other words, what is the dynamics of the change inherent in removing from one gustatory context to another?<sup>56</sup> As Purnima Mankekar has pointed out, food “acquires a distinctive valence... in diasporic and

---

<sup>53</sup> Beardsworth & Keil, *Sociology on the Menu*, 77-87, who suggest that women often suffer from nutritional inequalities. They also point to research showing that male violence against women sometimes is food-related, a consequence of “food failure.” A concrete, historical treatment of nutritional inequality in a patriarchal society is found in Larry George, *A Sermon in the Desert: Belief and Behavior in Early St. George, Utah* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988); see also Roman Sandgruber, “Nutrition in Austria in the Industrial Age,” in *European Food History: A Research Review*, ed. Hans J. Teutberg (New York: Leicester University Press, 1992), 146-167. For a very different view of women’s food roles, see Brett Williams, “Why Migrant Women Feed Their Husbands Tamales: Foodways as a Basis for a Revisionist View of Tejano Family Life,” in Brown & Mussell, *Ethnic and Regional Foodways*, 113-126.

<sup>54</sup> Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 1.

<sup>55</sup> M. Conner & C. Armitage, *The Social Psychology of Food* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2002), 1.

<sup>56</sup> The term “gastrodynamics” was introduced by M. S. A. Rao, more than likely influenced by the use of the term “gastropolitics” by Arjun Appadurai. Rao, “Conservatism and Change,” Appadurai, “Gastro-Politics in Hindu South Asia,” *American Ethnologist* 8 (1981): 494-511.

migrant communities” as food habits become markers of “cultural continuity, difference, hybridity, and/or assimilation.”<sup>57</sup> With the ability to express both “oneness” and “otherness,”<sup>58</sup> food is a particularly apt medium for the negotiation of new identities.

Social scientists have used a wide variety of approaches to the study of gastrodynamics in migration contexts. Many works demonstrate what might seem obvious: all else being equal, those immigrants who have lived in the country longer or arrived at an earlier age tend toward more acculturated food habits, and those who value their ethnic heritage the most also are more likely to eat ethnic foods.<sup>59</sup> Another form of analysis divides cuisines into core, secondary core, and peripheral foods; with core foods being staples that remain in the diet some time after the sporadically used peripheral foods disappear.<sup>60</sup> Eugene Anderson developed a more elaborate model, derived from his studies of Chinese American foodways. According to this model, traditional sweets and snack foods disappear first, followed by drinks, breakfast, lunch, dinner, and finally festive foods.<sup>61</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup> Purnima Mankekar, “‘India Shopping:’ Indian Grocery Stores and Transnational Configurations of Belonging,” in J. L. Watson & M. Caldwell, *The Cultural Politics of Food and Eating* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2005), 203.

<sup>58</sup> Fischler, “Food, Self, and Identity,” 275, see also Anna Meigs, “Food as Cultural Construction,” in Counihan & Van Esterik, *Food and Culture*, 103.

<sup>59</sup> E. g., Richard D. Alba, *Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of White America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990); Aryeh D. Stein et al., “Migration to the United States and Dietary Change among Polish Women,” presented at the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology meeting, San Diego, Apr. 11-15, 2003, FASEB Journal 17 (2003): Abstract No. 690.16 (abstract only).

<sup>60</sup> P. G. Kittler & K. Sucher, *Food and Culture in America: A Nutrition Handbook* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1989), 14.

<sup>61</sup> Anderson, *Everyone Eats*, 204. It is easy to poke holes in such a broadly generalizing model. For example, the Dutch in New York seem to have held on to seemingly “peripheral” foods like cookies, pastries, and fruit preserves longer than other foods, into the eighteenth and even the nineteenth century. Scandinavian immigrants, too, held on to traditional cakes and cookies longer than other dishes. Peter G. Rose, *The Sensible Cook: Dutch Foodways in the Old and the New World* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1989), 27-29; Richard Pillsbury, *No Foreign Food: The American Diet in Time and Place* (Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, 1998), 148. The special persistence of feast foods is, however, generally recognized. See, for example, Rao, “Conservatism and Change,” 124-126. This persistence was historically



Ultimately such schemata are unsatisfying because they tell us little about the meanings and contexts of culinary acculturation, and thus have little to say about the relationship between food and identity, whether at the collective or individual level. Only a very few sociological studies of immigrant food behavior have examined the negotiation of identity while paying close attention to social, cultural, and economic context. Among these I will briefly mention Jitsuichi Masuoka's "Changing Food Habits of the Japanese in Hawaii" and Krishnendu Ray's *The Migrant's Table*.

Masuoka studied the food habits of first- and second-generation Japanese immigrants in a sugar plantation community in Hawaii in the 1940s. Assuming that any culture has its own "food complex" made up of cultural and institutional rules, he set out to investigate how such a complex is maintained or changed in the context of migration. This case was especially interesting in part because of the high status associated with the consumption of rice in Japan. In Japan, people whose incomes increased would generally discard wheat products and potatoes and eat more and more polished rice. Masuoka found this to be true of the subjects of his investigation as well, at least in the beginning. But as the general living standard in the plantation community rose far above the accustomed Japanese level, polished rice gained such ubiquity that it could no longer effectively serve as a status marker in the local context. Influenced by American food culture, the Japanese immigrants reduced their rice consumption and ate more bread and pasta instead. This development was accelerated by the attitudes of the second

---

often tied to religious symbolism. In the traditional Bohemian Easter meal, for example, the bacon represented God's mercy, the bread the body of Christ, the molded butter the paschal lamb, etc. Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat*, 49.

generation, who accorded “American” food higher status than “Japanese” food, largely due to their education in American schools.<sup>62</sup>

Masuoka’s work pointed to one of the central aspects of migratory gastrodynamics: cooking and eating can be a complicated process of claiming status and identity in contradistinction to a wide variety of others; in the case of Japanese immigrants in Hawaii, they distinguished themselves from both Japanese in Japan and American haoles, and even from members of other generations within their own community or family. Similarly, Ray found that Bengali Americans used food to distinguish themselves from Bengalis in Bengal, and other Indians in India or America, as well as mainstream Americans. The maintenance of such boundaries is often accomplished through negative definition of the other, as when Bengali immigrants expressed disgust with meat and meat products or criticized what they perceived as faulty notions of hospitality and proper meals in American culture.<sup>63</sup> Bengalis thus tried to maintain particularity amidst the “universalizing project of capitalist modernity” while at the same time telling tales of individually loving, hating, or accommodating to “American” food, their food behavior was in this sense both “complicit” and “resistant.”<sup>64</sup>

Through situating the question of migratory gastrodynamics within a discursive context where tradition and particularity encounters modernity and cultural convergence, while at the same time exploring the interconnections between the large-scale processes of globalization and local and individual experiences, Ray broke new ground in the study

---

<sup>62</sup> Masuoka, “Changing Habits of the Japanese in Hawaii.”

<sup>63</sup> Ray, *The Migrant’s Table*, 78-81.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2, 79-91.

of immigrant food behavior. He described how for many Bengali Americans, each day has “moments of modernity and moments of tradition.” for example, cereal and coffee for breakfast, a slice of pizza for lunch, and dishes that are perceived as traditional for dinner (although this food, too, in reality is subtly adapted to American circumstances, exhibiting the “syncretism” or “creolization” typical of immigrant cuisine).<sup>65</sup> He also described the use of food to locate oneself in time and place and to create a “home” in a land not one’s “own.”<sup>66</sup> Thus Ray’s work demonstrates that we can study an almost infinitely large and complicated topic through the lens of single individuals coming to terms with their own identities and creating, as it were, their own narratives, through their eating and cooking and their kitchen gardens.

As should now be evident, historians of food behavior can potentially learn a great deal from the social sciences. Whether historians have actually done so is debatable. Much of the historical research on food takes place at the intersection of agricultural and economic history, on the one hand, and the history of health and nutrition, on the other. As a consequence, eating tends to be analyzed as “feeding” rather than as a meaningful social activity structured by cultural imperatives. Some time ago, a German historian went so far as to declare that in advanced industrialized societies, “significant social differences in diet no longer exist.”<sup>67</sup> Needless to say, such a view is only valid if one maintains an extremely limited view of what constitutes “significant social differences.”

Nevertheless, several recent works in food history reflect a more profound understanding of the social and cultural meanings of food, and some of these have dealt

---

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 48-57.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 131-135.

<sup>67</sup> H. J. Teutergberg, “The General Relationship between Diet and Industrialization,” in Forster & Forster, *European Diet*, 109.

specifically with immigrant foodways in the United States. A number of scholars have addressed what is now the best known case, the foodways of Italian Americans.

“Italian food” is a rather more complicated term than what is conventionally assumed in the advertisements of chain restaurants. In Utah, for example, the descendants of Calabrese immigrants used a variety of exotic ingredients and dishes, from flowers, chicken feet, and tripe, to lamb-brain, goat intestines and stuffed goat-head, to commemorate their roots and mark their separateness from their Mormon neighbors.<sup>68</sup> Peasants in rural Italy were often too poor to afford muscle meat, and appreciated “testicles, lungs, and brains.”<sup>69</sup> When they first arrived in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Italians used to eating such obviously “natural” foods found it easy to identify mainstream America with “disguised,” processed food; thus Americans were “people who ate peanut butter and jelly on mushy white bread that came out of a plastic package.”<sup>70</sup>

Many Italian immigrants had never eaten pizza or spaghetti with meatballs before arriving in the United States. In fact, the “codified” Italian cuisine consisting of pasta, tomato sauce, red wine, olive oil, etc., is largely an American amalgamation, a constructed or “invented” tradition. Although immigrants from Southern Italy might have known such foods from feasts where the rich shared their wealth and gastronomical habits, their deep poverty often meant that the everyday diet consisted of bread and vegetable soup. Besides, Italian foodways, like the culture and identity of Italians in general, were predominantly oriented toward the local and familial rather than an over-

---

<sup>68</sup> Richard Raspa, “Exotic Foods among Italian-Americans in Mormon Utah: Food as Nostalgic Enactment of Identity,” in Brown & Mussell, *Ethnic and Regional Foodways*, 185-194.

<sup>69</sup> Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat*, 52.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 55; Raspa, “Exotic Foods.”

arching national pattern. But through consuming meat, pasta, and white bread in America, Italian immigrants of peasant backgrounds could claim a status that had been denied them at home. They could celebrate their new homeland as one of abundant and luxuriant foods, while at the same time affirming their newly constructed identity as Italian Americans through foods now considered “Italian.” This contributed to the creation of a “privatized” ethnicity, sheltered from the stigmatization of immigrant culture in general and food habits in particular in the public realm. Within the private sphere of the Sunday meal, food fulfilled multiple social functions by serving to strengthen familial affect and power relationships while at the same time locating the family in the (expansively defined) American middle class *and* at a distance from the American mainstream.<sup>71</sup>

In what must now be regarded as the standard historical work on immigrants and food, Hasia Diner described in detail the transition from localism and poverty in Italy to the celebrated, codified “Italian” food in America. More generally, she emphasized time and time again the role hunger and the desire for more and better food played in the immigration and in people’s interpretation of their own lives as emigrants and immigrants. In her two other case studies in *Hungering for America*, she showed how the Irish and Jews from Eastern Europe, too, derived much of their migratory motivation from hunger. Yet the Irish, whose food habits and hunger were seen as imposed by colonial oppression, did not identify with their food, and the Jews, in the tension between religious regulations and American abundance, often found themselves in conflict over

---

<sup>71</sup> Cinotto, “Leonardo Covello,” Poe, “Labor and Leisure of Food Production.” For the early-twentieth-century professionals’ attacks on immigrant cooking, table manners, food shopping, etc., see Levenstein, *Revolution at the Table*, 103-106.

food rather than united around it like the Italians. Although the three cases were different in several ways, Diner argued that each could be explained in terms of class divisions in the home country, the details and purposes of the migration itself, and the relative prosperity many immigrants found in America.<sup>72</sup>

Although this dissertation primarily deals with individual rather than group experiences, it might be useful to briefly outline how immigrants to the rural Midwest differed from those Diner studied, i. e., Irish, Italian, and Jewish immigrants who settled mostly in the urban-industrial centers of the Northeast. This inevitably requires a great deal of simplification, but still seems warranted, especially given Diner's attempt to make these groups' experiences stand for the immigrant experience in general. Class divisions were prominent in Scandinavia and Central Europe as well, but less extreme than in Italy or Ireland. Furthermore, the economies of the former countries were more developed, and their emigrants proportionately more likely to speak of poverty and wealth in terms of money and property rather than food (they tended, in short, to be both more capitalist and less poor). In fact, many rural Midwestern immigrants, especially men, seem to have been obsessed with commoditization, assigning every item to be discussed in a letter home a monetary value. Thus the purposes of immigration were somewhat different as well, more commonly a search for economic opportunity in general and more rarely a product of outright hunger. On the whole, Diner's effort to elevate hunger to be *the* primary mover in transatlantic migration seems to be an overstatement of the facts. The Italian case, although important and well-researched, might not be as typical as some

---

<sup>72</sup> Diner, *Hungering for America*.

scholars assume. The special standing of “Italian” food in American cuisine, among other things, makes it unique.

Nevertheless, food and food habits played an important role in the negotiation of identity in the rural Midwestern context as well, as will be seen below. These experiences can best be understood in relief against the European background. Historically, Europeans ate more meat than other agricultural civilizations. A high point was reached in the Late Middle Ages, following the Black Death which reduced the human population and allowed the transformation of vacant land into pasture. Throughout the early modern era, however, a period of “depecoration” or decline in meat eating took place. Europeans also ate less butter and fewer eggs, increasingly relying on grain and potatoes as population rose and pastures were turned into fields. Swedish peasants, for example, ate less meat and vegetables and more porridge, rye bread, and herring in 1800 than in 1600. It is ironic that European agriculture only overcame its Malthusian limitations through the same structural changes that uprooted many rural people and drove them to emigrate. Thus in the second half of the nineteenth century, millions were leaving the continent amidst qualitative and quantitative improvements in diet and food availability.<sup>73</sup>

As of 1800, or even 1900, one of the most dramatic contrasts between the United States and Europe could be found in the ratio of population to arable land. This influenced the relative opportunities for land ownership (a key factor in immigration to the rural Midwest), but it also influenced the availability of various foodstuffs. In

---

<sup>73</sup> Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Century, Vol. 1: The Structures of Everyday Life: The Limits of the Possible*, trans. Sian Reynolds (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992 [1979]), 190-202; Teuterberg, “The General Relationship between Diet and Industrialization,” 64-65; idem, “The Diet as an Object of Historical Analysis in Germany,” in idem, *European Food History*, 109-128; Mats Essemyr, “Nutritional Needs and Social Esteem: Two Aspects of Diet in Sweden during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries,” in Teuterberg, *European Food History*, 256-277; Bodnar, *The Transplanted*, 23-30.

America, the high status of meat was combined with easy availability, and in general the quantity and variety of food was higher than that to which especially the poorest immigrants were accustomed. Undoubtedly most immigrants saw this abundance as a great blessing. Some of the immigrants who arrived in the rural Midwest had of course known hunger all too well in their homelands. Peter J. Smith remembered working as a shepherd during the summer in his native Denmark. Although only eight years old, he had to work from six o'clock in the morning until sunset. During this time he had only one meal, consisting of two or three slices of rye bread with lard and cheese.<sup>74</sup> Croatian immigrant Peter Maretich, too, remembered a rather meager existence in the old country:

Out there if we had once a week meat to eat, that was lucky. For breakfast we used to eat corn meal with milk, or corn mush, or whatever you call it, and for dinner, maybe it was cooked potatoes and probably some noodles in there, and no meat, a little bread with it and no butter. And that was our meal there. Perhaps if the men were working out in the field real hard, well, some of them probably had a chicken killed so they could get a little chicken soup and a little chicken. [...] On Sunday they might have a little meat... But when we get to this country we had meat every day if we want to.<sup>75</sup>

When the interviewer from the *Ethnic History of Wisconsin Project* asked if they had experienced political or religious persecution in Croatia, Maretich replied that “no, they

---

<sup>74</sup> Peter J. Smith, *Memories of the Life of Peter J. Smith* (Eau Claire, Wisc.: unpublished, n. d.).

<sup>75</sup> Interview with Peter Maretich, *Ethnic History of Wisconsin Project*, 4. Wisconsin Historical Society archives.



didn't force them to this country, but they forced them themselves, because they were hungry.”<sup>76</sup>

However, even the American custom of eating “roast and cake, every day,” as Niels Hansen repeatedly put it, was subject to interpretation and reinterpretation depending on the individual's feelings about the new country. Hansen, a Danish weaver, arrived in the United States in the 1890s. He was already in his sixties, and he and his wife had come to the Chicago area to be closer to their grown-up children. Hansen first used the phrase “roast and cake” in an 1894 letter to his brother, where he noted that “the children live as the custom is here, with roast and cake every day.”<sup>77</sup> This was a matter-of-fact remark, seemingly unrelated to his own dreary and uneventful existence as an unemployed newcomer. His only amusement was visiting a Danish tavern, but even there he found the differences from home appalling, the prices for beer and schnapps being so high that “one can soon sell everything one owns.”<sup>78</sup>

Eventually, Niels Hansen settled in Highwood, Illinois, some distance from Chicago and the children. He continued to struggle with homesickness and regret, and three years later a new letter complained about performing hard work in the summer heat with only water and no beer to drink.<sup>79</sup> As late as March of 1899, the Hansens were still “owls among crows” with little knowledge of the English language; and Niels grumbled that “even a salted herring costs 20 *øre*.”<sup>80</sup> But later that year, something had changed. Hansen informed his brother that he had gotten used to drinking water instead of beer and

---

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>77</sup> Niels Hansen, letter to Hans Hansen, 8 November, 1894. Niels Hansen papers, Danish Immigrant Archives, Grand View College, Des Moines, Iowa.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Idem, letter to Hans Hansen, 23 June, 1897, in Hansen papers.

<sup>80</sup> Idem, letter to Hans Hansen, 5 March, 1899, in Hansen papers.

liquor, and expressed satisfaction because “here no one is offered *øllebrød* and salted herring, but roast and fine cakes as much as they want for every meal.”<sup>81</sup> Working as a lumberjack the next year, he still noted the absence of beer and liquor during the workday, but also that the food was better than in Denmark: white bread, roast, and butter.<sup>82</sup>

By 1904, Hansen showed outright enthusiasm for American foodways. Although there were only three meals a day, and no beer, the food was good and he was thankful to have forgotten the “evil habit” of drinking liquor. He went on to say that

you should know, dear brother, that America is a good land, especially for workers. They need not stand and watch when the rich man lives with roast and cake, because the worker gets that every day if he wants it.<sup>83</sup>

Thus the interpretation of “roast and cake” had come a long way. What he at first saw as an odd, foreign custom became over time a sign of the country’s wealth. Eventually, “roast and cake” came to symbolize the goodness of the country itself, defined by the possibility of social equality rooted in common prosperity.

Historians and other scholars have described how processes of urbanization, industrialization, and population growth disrupted traditional foodways and complicated the relationship between foods and their sociocultural meanings. It has even been claimed that modernity may create situations of “gastro-anomie,” a bewildering normlessness in

---

<sup>81</sup> Idem, letter to Hans Hansen, 2 September, 1899, in Hansen papers. *Øllebrød*, lit. beer bread, is rye bread boiled in wheat beer; like salted herring, typical poor man’s fare in nineteenth century Denmark.

<sup>82</sup> Idem, letter to Hans Hansen, 2 January, 1900, in Hansen papers.

<sup>83</sup> Idem, letter to Hans Hansen, 10 December, 1904, in Hansen papers.

the realm of food caused by the “disaggregation” of old meanings.<sup>84</sup> The risk of food losing its accustomed meaning is, of course, especially great in the context of migration.

When he first arrived in the United States, Niels Hansen could only use the phrase “roast and cake” to define the American other. Undoubtedly the fact that this other included his children deepened his feelings of isolation and hopelessness. As he himself gradually became part of that other through living, working, and eating in America, “roast and cake” could take on a positive meaning, representing abundance and a different standard of living. But it was only after more than a decade in the United States that Hansen finally was able to tie American food, the American economy, and his own immigrant identity together in one coherent whole where the abundance of food symbolized how immigrants could come to America and, by eating the same foods, claim equal social status with the rich.<sup>85</sup> Thus “roast and cake” went from being a *sign* or outward manifestation of one characteristic of American society to being a *symbol* of the totality of it. The concept of “roast and cake, every day” had become a fully articulated medium for understanding America.<sup>86</sup>

---

<sup>84</sup> The term was coined by Fischler, see Beardsworth & Keil, *Sociology on the Menu*, 66-67; see also McIntosh, *Sociologies of Food and Nutrition*, 29; Teuteberg, “The General Relationship between Diet and Industrialization;” and Mennell, “Divergences and Convergences in the Development of Culinary Cultures,” in Teuteberg, *European Food History*, 285.

<sup>85</sup> In reality, the very rich in the United States had begun to abandon the “roast and cake” paradigm by this time. After 1880, they increasingly embraced fancy French cuisine, requiring skilled chefs whom the middle and lower classes could not afford to hire, thus creating some distance between the rich and others in food habits. Niels Hansen was presumably not aware of this, and his concept of the “rich” probably derived mostly from his experiences in Denmark. See Levenstein, *Revolution at the Table*, 10-22.

<sup>86</sup> It is important to make this distinction between food as medium and food in itself (as a message), although this binary distinction necessarily conceals complexity. If we consistently interpret each mention of food in the sources as a message about food, we will tend to overstate the importance of food-as-food beyond all proportion. Unfortunately some works, including Diner’s otherwise magnificent *Hungering for America*, may have gone too far in that direction. As the case of “roast and cake” shows, deciphering what people talk about when they talk about food requires a great deal of attention to context. My differentiation between sign and symbol here follows Tzvetan Todorov, *Theories of the Symbol*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1982).

Europeans traveling to America sometimes encountered a new world of food as early as the transatlantic voyage. Simon Kjems, traveling on third class in 1891, found the food decent but the coffee “undrinkable.”<sup>87</sup> Nils Olsen Haatvedt, who left Norway in 1879, could not bring himself to drink the coffee, either. It was “sweet and disgusting,” filled with syrup and “other additives.” The tea, apparently, was not much better. Nor was the food quite what he would have liked:

We couldn't say too much about the soup, it wasn't really too poorly made. It consisted of coarse and fatty beef, whoever is not used to eating meat that fresh will not be likely to enjoy it. I don't know what we would have done if we hadn't brought along a little food ourselves. Salted veal, salty sausage, *gamalost*, *sureprim*, and flatbread, these mentioned things one should definitely bring aboard, or at least that is what I would prefer.<sup>88</sup>

Although clearly a peasant of limited educational achievement, Haatvedt (like many others) was accustomed to having coffee, meat, and dairy products available to him, so much so that being without them for a few weeks was seen as highly undesirable. This contrasts sharply with the well-known case of Italian immigrants, who had very limited access to such things in the old country. But of even greater interest here is the fact that Haatvedt's suggestions for what “one” should bring along on the journey to

---

<sup>87</sup> Hjalmar Kjems, *Mit Liv* (unpublished, n.d.).

<sup>88</sup> Nils Olsen Haatvedt, letter to his father and siblings, June 13, 1879. *Amerikabrev fra Norsk Utvandremuseum*. Collection of America letters published online, [http://www.nb.no/emigrasjon/brev\\_oversikt\\_forfatter.php](http://www.nb.no/emigrasjon/brev_oversikt_forfatter.php). *Gamalost*, lit. old cheese, is a very pungent blue-mold cheese made from sour skim milk. *Sureprim* is a whey product also made from sour milk.

America were extraordinarily specific, and he admitted in the end that they were “what I would prefer.” From a structural perspective, the noteworthy connection between the five food items he lists are that they all, besides being traditional, local (non-commodity) products of the mountain peasants, require extensive transformations (cultural or natural) from their natural forms (meat, milk, grain) and have distinctive flavors identified with the process rather than the raw material. They are also “dry,” non-perishable foods. In other words, they individually and combined form a perfect structural opposition to a soup made from fresh meat. Thus, whether he intended to or not, Haatvedt in this short passage revealed the basic principles that made up his gustatory identity, specifying what was his food and what was foreign or “other.”

In such cases, food became a component of an immigrant’s social cognition.<sup>89</sup> Social cognition about food behavior was not limited to food items alone. Just as most people have relatively rigid ideas about what constitutes “food,” most people also have very clear (if usually more or less unconscious) views as to what constitutes a “meal.”<sup>90</sup> Meals are defined by a variety of factors, including proper organization, timing, and frequency as well as the types of food served and the social rules for eating with others. Due to the variability of these rules across cultures, immigrants were destined to encounter different conceptions of meals, which in turn led them into social cognition processes situating those others relative to themselves.

---

<sup>89</sup> Social cognition involves “how individuals make sense of social situations,” how they understand both themselves and others. Conner & Armitage, *Social Psychology of Food*, 2-3.

<sup>90</sup> Douglas, “Deciphering a Meal;” Simmel, “The Sociology of the Meal;” Khare, “The Indian Meal: Aspects of Cultural Economy and Food Use,” in idem & Rao, *Food, Society, and Culture*, 159-183; Douglas, *In the Active Voice*, 90-91, Ray, *The Migrant’s Table*, 78-81; Beardsworth & Keil, *Sociology on the Menu*, 83-84.

Niels Sorensen Rungborg emigrated from Denmark in 1903. He and his wife left in pursuit of property (“our own home”) rather than because of hunger, but the description of their transatlantic voyage in his unpublished autobiography revolves largely around food.<sup>91</sup> After a dinner of peas and bacon followed by intense seasickness which incapacitated them both, Rungborg’s wife wondered “if we couldn’t turn around and go back home to... familiar meat kettles.”<sup>92</sup> However, they got used to the sea and seem to have appreciated the shipboard diet: cereal, bread, sausage, and coffee for breakfast; soup or peas, meat or herring, rice pudding, apple cider, and sweet bread for the noon meal; meat, herring, preserves, cheese, and tea for the evening meal; with a serving of oatmeal soup later in the evening.<sup>93</sup> But due either to poverty or dietary laws imposed by religion, some passengers did not take part in these meals:

The Jews and Polacks ate and drank all day long with a greed that defied comparison. They scraped up the food and stuffed it in their mouths with both hands. They mostly ate bread and white onions, and would rub the crust of the bread with an onion. When it had been thoroughly rubbed they stuffed it down their throats with one large chunk after the other and this continued throughout the day. They have no regular mealtimes... However, they did need a little time to digest their food and they used this time to fight and quarrel.<sup>94</sup>

---

<sup>91</sup> Niels Sorensen Rungborg, *Autobiography* (unpublished, n.d.)

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

Although the author may have aimed for humor in this passage, the fact that it was included in an autobiography long after the actual event suggests that the strange food behavior of Jews and Poles was a significant and distasteful aspect of the voyage. The offensiveness of their foodways essentially stemmed from two sources: first, their manners – scraping, stuffing, rubbing, stuffing again – as they greedily ate large chunks of food; second, the apparent lack of temporal structuring of these actions: eating and drinking all day long, with no regular mealtimes. Both pointed to the same inevitable conclusion, namely that these people failed to frame the biological process of incorporation within any recognizable cultural framework, in effect displaying the behavior of animals or barbarians rather than of civilized human beings. They failed to show the proper restraint and discipline imposed by the European “civilizing process,” but failed perhaps more egregiously in not adhering to appropriate standards for constructing a meal, a key concept in any human culture. What Rungborg perceived as constant “fighting and quarreling” only re-enforced the impression of deviation from civilized human behavior. Rather than attributing this behavior to time, place, and circumstance, Rungborg interpreted the perceived shortcomings as inherent flaws in such people: thus they “have” no mealtimes, although these events took place in a distant past and everything else in the passage is told in the past tense.

It was relatively easy to dismiss and condemn the habits of strangers encountered briefly aboard ship. Regularly sharing meals with others was a different matter altogether. Among the Hua of Papua New Guinea, food not produced and cooked by co-residents or kin is considered dirty, and cannot be eaten. In the Indian caste system, who can eat whose foods in what form depends on highly complex rules. More generally, eating

someone's food implies an acceptance, not only of the food, but of the person who made it. It also implies a form of community with those with whom one eats.<sup>95</sup>

Many immigrants to the rural Midwest, especially young adults (including what we now would call teenagers) started their lives in the new country in the employ of a farm family, as farmhands (men) or domestics (women). These newcomers would usually try to find employment with fellow nationals, but that was not always possible. Living and eating with "strangers" thus often became a necessity, and the cohabitation and commensality that followed resulted in adaptation and, occasionally, conflict.

Christian Hansen, who had emigrated from Denmark in 1885, described a difficult search for employment in rural Minnesota in the winter of 1887 – 1888.<sup>96</sup> He failed to find a Danish farmer who needed his help. Finally, a Yankee couple offered to take him in. These were well-dressed people with a nice house and a good barn, but there was "a snake in paradise," as Hansen put it. To wit, the couple only ate two meals a day, one after milking in the morning and one before milking in the afternoon. Hansen was told that he could get more food each night before going to bed, but the couple did not eat at that time. Used to following the "table custom of the house,"<sup>97</sup> the farmhand could not bring himself to eat an extra meal. Instead, he went to bed hungry every night.

In the end, Hansen went to another farmer (a Yankee widow) and accepted a 20 percent lower wage in return for assurance that he would get three proper meals a day

---

<sup>95</sup> Meigs, "Food as a Cultural Construction;" Khare, "The Indian Meal," 176; Enrique Rodriguez-Alegria, "Eating like an Indian: Social Relations in the Spanish Colonies," *Current Anthropology* 46 (2005): 551-573; Rozin, "Sociocultural Influences," 235; Williams, "Why Migrant Women Feed Their Husbands Tamales," Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine, and Class*, 12-13; Fischler, "Food, Self, and Identity," Counihan & Van Esterik, "Introduction," in idem, *Food and Culture*, 1-7; Douglas, "Deciphering a Meal," 42.

<sup>96</sup> Christian Hansen, *Da jeg kom til Minnesota* (Tyler, Minn.: unpubl., 1927).

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 10.



(and be allowed to smoke). When Hansen returned to tender his resignation, the Yankee housewife again suggested a third, separate meal in the evening. The Dane, however, steadfastly refused to consider this option, and prepared to leave. The woman then insisted that he accept a large piece of pie before leaving. There can be little doubt that she felt accused of “food failure,” although it is hard to say whether the slice of pie was meant as some kind of rebuttal or an attempt toward restitution. What is more interesting here is that Christian Hansen walked dozens of miles in the Minnesota winter, quit his job, and accepted a substantial decrease in wages, all because he could not imagine himself eating a meal apart from the rest of the household. To eat alone would have placed him with the “Jews and Polacks” condemned by Rungborg, as a man unfamiliar with the proper social and cultural structuring of food events, and thus a man outside civilization, driven by base biological needs alone. Hansen’s refusal to accept a third feeding indicated that he did not accept the Yankee housewife’s imposition of a new culinary order that would be profoundly degrading. The woman’s consternation is equally understandable; if eating food implies acceptance of those who cook and serve it, rejecting someone’s food and foodways obviously implies the opposite.

Although most immigrants to the rural Midwest came with hopes of upward social mobility and were willing to start at the lower end of the ladder, there were some who arrived with a strong status consciousness and expected others to serve and defer to them. While the former tended to embrace social equality and democratic ideals, the latter often abhorred American egalitarianism and feared the social embarrassment of constant interaction with presumptuous inferiors. While others celebrated American plenty, Pastor Johan Storm Munch wrote from his “so-called parsonage” in Wiota,

Wisconsin, that “food is difficult here, and help even more so. On the whole, life here is one of renunciation and rich in wants...”<sup>98</sup>

The wants Munch referred to were not akin to the persistent hunger from which many Europeans had fled. Indeed, in the very same letter he wrote that his wife was “getting fat and chubby.” More to the point was his description of a German hotel he had visited in Milwaukee, where he had eaten “completely in European fashion” with “proper food” and “Rhine wine.” This hotel contrasted with regular American hotels where “you only get water and miserable food and service.”<sup>99</sup> Brief reminders of the lifestyle of Europe’s privileged classes were the high points in the Munchs’ four year sojourn in the United States.

To recreate that lifestyle in rural Wisconsin was a different matter. Caja Munch, the pastor’s wife, wrote long, detailed letters about her arduous attempts to build a household reminiscent of her mother’s. In her mid-twenties when they first arrived, she was a skilled and resourceful housekeeper with a high opinion of her own position in society, but nonetheless in desperate need of recognition and approval. She wrote about the preparations for Christmas that “I made almost all the things you prepare, dear Mother,”<sup>100</sup> and assured her sisters-in-law that her cooking made the pastor happy (“I always have to make something extra for him to really make it as pleasant as

---

<sup>98</sup> Johan Storm Munch, letter to Else Munch, July 16, 1857. *The Strange American Way: Letters of Caja Munch from Wiotia, Wisconsin, 1855 – 1859*, trans. Helene Munch & Peter A. Munch (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970), 104.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Caja Munch, letter to Thalie Falch, 18 – 20 January, 1858, in Munch & Munch, *The Strange American Way*, 131.

possible”).<sup>101</sup> While he complained about renunciation and want, she was making his favorite foods: meatballs, mutton-and-cabbage, or blood pudding.

Even during the voyage to America the Munchs were able to retain dietary standards to which most nineteenth-century Europeans were wholly unaccustomed. Caja Munch described a diet of fresh bread, salami, cheese, cured ham, sardines, and soft-boiled eggs, along with dinners of canned soup, ham, roast, and pudding, with frequent servings of cake and wine. Although the captain clearly belonged to what she considered a lesser breed of people, he was civilized enough to serve them champagne before sailing into port in New York.<sup>102</sup>

As was often the case in the rural Midwest, the pastor and his wife largely depended on the congregation for foodstuffs, especially when they first arrived in Wiotia. After several months in the country, they had bought no food except a small amount of meat (and of course the two all-important store items, coffee and sugar). Meanwhile, parishioners had provided them with a hindquarter of a cow, some piglets, chickens, wild rabbits, quails, dried fish, flour, bread, lard, butter, cream, eggs, potatoes, carrots, onions, cucumbers, apples, nuts, and beer. The couple was eating three hot meals a day just to keep up, “living very luxuriously” on ragout of hare, creamed chicken, quail, and roasted piglets.<sup>103</sup>

Caja Munch’s letters were in fact filled with reports of culinary delights. At a christening in another high-status family, they ate roast goose and meatball soup with

---

<sup>101</sup> Idem, letter to Henriette and Caroline Munch, 23-24 February, 1857, in Munch & Munch, *The Strange American Way*, 78.

<sup>102</sup> Idem, letter to Mr. & Mrs. F. W. S. Falch, 17 October – 5 November, 1855, in Munch & Munch, *The Strange American Way*, 4-8.

<sup>103</sup> Idem, letter to Mr. & Mrs. Falch, 25 November, 1855 – 15 February, 1856, in Munch & Munch, *The Strange American Way*, 15-31.

“delicious red wine” and champagne. For their first Christmas in America, she prepared quenelles, beef olives, collared and salted beef, pickled hams, headcheese, crullers, and gingerbread cookies; and their Christmas dinner consisted of rice porridge, roast beef, and cookies. The following year she made three kinds of sausage, meatballs, and Christmas bread. For her husband’s birthday in 1857 she served chocolate sent over from Norway, sponge cake, mutton-and-cabbage, currant compote, nuts, apples, plums, and grapes, with home-made bird-cherry liqueur. The following year the same occasion was celebrated even more splendidly with sugar cake and wine in the morning; roast goose, collard greens, creamed cabbage, apples, and beer for dinner; and nuts, apples, and jam in the evening. Caja Munch brewed beer and made her own wine from fruit and berries. She made rye bread from the grain they raised, and kept a variety of animals and fowl to maintain access to milk, eggs, and meat. In her garden grew peas, cabbage, and other vegetables. There was corn and pumpkins, too, but never any mention of these foreign plants being used as food. They were apparently only used for animal feed.<sup>104</sup>

The abundance and variety at the Munchs’ table would have impressed most Europeans arriving in the United States in the nineteenth century. Yet they frequently complained, both about their own food and the food they were served by others. Whereas Niels Hansen made “roast and cake, every day” the symbol of everything that was great about America, Caja Munch noted with contempt the Yankee habit of having “pork, coffee, and pie morning, noon, and evening.”<sup>105</sup> Even worse, Norwegian immigrants had adopted this habit, so the Munchs were forced to consume these items every time they

---

<sup>104</sup> See letters from Caja Munch to her parents in Munch & Munch, *The Strange American Way*, 3-159.

<sup>105</sup> Caja Munch, letter to Mr. & Mrs. Falch, 25 November, 1855 – 15 February, 1856, in Munch & Munch, *The Strange American Way*, 22.

visited parishioners: “we are really tired of it, especially since these dishes are not at all our favorite ones.”<sup>106</sup> Hansen might have thought that universal access to rich foods served to dissolve class distinctions, but the Munchs knew those distinctions to be derived from birth and breeding. Thus, rich foods being available to all, they were no longer appropriate markers of status. Instead, the Munchs judged others by their table manners and methods of food preparation, and most fell short of their lofty standards.<sup>107</sup>

Eating with others not of their class, whether Norwegian, German, Irish, or Yankee, involved uneasy interactions with dirty, rude, and impertinent people, in some cases so offensive and disgusting that they refused to eat or simply got up and left. Americans of various backgrounds also did not “bother too much” about how they prepared their food.<sup>108</sup> In her second letter home, Caja complained that

Americans never have soup, they don’t even know what it is, meatballs arouse great curiosity; on the whole, they never use any kind of gravy or prepared food. Fruit porridge with cream they don’t even know how to eat...<sup>109</sup>

In addition, she noted that it was impossible to procure rye, that American rye was at any rate inferior, and that this inferior rye, even if it could be obtained, was not ground in the same manner as in Norway. Thus they missed rye bread “beyond measure” and were

---

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> As Paul Fussell has pointed out, the lower classes tend to define class in terms of wealth, the middle classes in terms of education and occupation, and the upper classes in terms of “taste, values, ideas, style, and behavior.” Fussell, *Class: A Guide through the American Status System* (New York: Summit Books, 1983), 16.

<sup>108</sup> Idem, letter to Mr. & Mrs. Falch, 28 October, 1857, in Munch & Munch, *The Strange American Way*, 128.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., letter to Mr. & Mrs. Falch, 25 November, 1855 – 15 February, 1856, in Munch & Munch, *The Strange American Way*, 23.

forced to eat “dry wheat loaves” instead.<sup>110</sup> Caja Munch went to great lengths to brew her own beer, but admitted that the end product was a “poor substitute for the Bavarian,” which was what the pastor really wanted.<sup>111</sup>

The social historian might ask what makes this case significant. After all, the Munchs were hardly “typical” or “representative” of immigrants to the rural Midwest. From the vantage point of cultural history, however, they are especially interesting exactly because their case represents a deviation from the “typical.” Most immigrants both resisted and participated in their own displacement from old food habits, trying to find some acceptable combination of tradition, acculturation, and innovation. J. Jorgensen, who settled in Dakota Territory in 1874, cherished the times he was able to get hold of a little coffee and sugar, because this made what he considered “proper” hospitality possible. Nevertheless, when coffee was not available, he made do with “prairie tea” made from shoestring grass, which he described as “very tasty.”<sup>112</sup> To Caja Munch, and certainly to Johan Storm Munch, such divergences from “proper” practice would have been unthinkable. Previous studies of immigrant food behavior have often found that adult males have the most traditionalist preferences in food, and that females engage in “menu negotiation” between the ideal diet (largely defined by adult males) and external constraints.<sup>113</sup> Thus, in food habits as in other aspects of life, immigrants to the rural Midwest tended to accommodate to a new identity that was neither that of the old

---

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 34. By the time of her next letter, six bushels of rye had been obtained; later they planted their own rye.

<sup>111</sup> Idem, letter to Henriette and Caroline Munch, 23-24 February, 1857, in Munch & Munch, *The Strange American Way*, 78. “Bavarian” in this context means commercially produced lager beer.

<sup>112</sup> J. Jorgensen, *Danskerne i Turner County, South Dakota* (unpubl., n.d.), 4.

<sup>113</sup> Goode et al., “Framework for the Analysis of Continuity and Change,” 67; see also Poe, “Labor and Leisure of Food Production,” 142; Cordona, “Re-Encountering Cuban Tastes.”

country nor that of “Americans” culturally defined (i.e., Yankees). But whether in relation to food or in general, the Munchs did not want a new identity. Caja Munch, who had a garden and cooked, knew something about the limitations of the natural environment, cooking vessels, and available raw materials. Yet she desperately tried to emulate the “ideal diet” defined by her husband’s preferences and her mother’s cooking. Her husband, with little involvement in either production or preparation of food, never managed to see departures from his accustomed habits as anything other than “renunciation and want.” While most immigrants accepted the need for flexibility, adjustment, and innovation, Johan Storm Munch was truly “transplanted,” still fully Norwegian in America. After a while, he just wanted to go home. Hoping to completely transplant a set of cultural practices to a new social context could only lead to disappointment and failure. Unlike Pastor Munch, most immigrants had enough common sense and peasant pragmatism to understand that.

Although Johan Storm Munch’s life was unsatisfying as it was, it clearly would have been unbearable without his wife being available to cater to his culinary whims. As Ray pointed out in *The Migrant’s Table*, male immigrants who arrive without a female companion often have little knowledge about the preparation of food, even of familiar, traditional foods.<sup>114</sup> Indeed, many single male immigrants in the rural Midwest survived on miserable diets.

Theodor van Dreveldt was a liberal intellectual from West Prussia who came to America primarily for political reasons. He spent the winter of 1847 – 1848 in a poorly

---

<sup>114</sup> Ray, *The Migrant’s Table*, 73; see also N. Manaan & B. J. Boucher, “The Bangladeshi Diaspora and Its Dietary Profile in East London, 1990 – 2000,” in *Food in the Migrant Experience*, ed. Anne J. Kershen (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2002), 233.

built log cabin on the Wisconsin frontier. Living on a mixture of flour, water, and fat, he eventually became quite sick. The doctor told him to eat meat three times a day and to drink a glass of Rhine wine regularly. As he for the first time sat down to drink wine in his cabin, he realized that he “had purchased many privations for a great deal of money. Freedom is a good thing and worthy of a man, and yet over here it comes at a damned high price.”<sup>115</sup> That day, van Dreveldt decided to return to Europe.

Theodore Bost was an educated Swiss man of thoroughly bourgeois origins. A similarly pathetic food situation nevertheless existed on his claim on the Minnesota frontier:

I have two tin plates and some knives and forks. I boil six or seven potatoes and peel them; next I fry up a good big piece of bacon and brown my potatoes in the bacon grease; then I eat my whole meal using my knees as a table. Sometimes I fry the potatoes in butter, but since it costs thirty cents a pound, I use it sparingly. Sometimes, too – as I did today – I make a boiled dinner of bacon, potatoes, and rutabagas; this is for special occasions when I want a good soup.<sup>116</sup>

As Ray recognized in the case of contemporary Bengali immigrants, the food situation of the single male immigrant can return to relative normality with the arrival of a wife from

---

<sup>115</sup> Theodor van Dreveldt, letter to Franz von Weise, March 1848, in *Lives and Letters of an Immigrant Family: The van Dreveldt's Experiences along the Missouri, 1844 – 1866*, ed. & trans. Kenneth Kronenberg (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 73-79, quote p. 79.

<sup>116</sup> Theodore Bost, letter to Ami and Jenny Bost, 2 December, 1855, in *A Frontier Family in Minnesota: Letters of Theodore and Sophie Bost, 1851 – 1920*, ed. & trans. Ralph H. Bowen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), 72-73.



the old country.<sup>117</sup> Theodore Bost soon began a long-distance courtship, and two and a half years later he welcomed Sophie Bonjour to Minnesota. They married the next day.<sup>118</sup>

Both the Munchs and the Bosts wrote unusually articulate and expressive letters home, but there are in many ways more contrasts than similarities in how they described their experiences in rural America. While Johan Storm Munch even years later condemned the “dishwater” presented as coffee on the train from New York, the Bosts had no complaints about their *Ersatz* coffee made from wheat or rye.<sup>119</sup> Sophie made “excellent wine” from fruit, syrup, and water,<sup>120</sup> and especially delighted in all the sweet flavors to which the farm gave her access. Honey from wild bees and sugar and molasses from maple trees, with “wonderful” and “beautiful” flavors, made for great excitement in her letters.<sup>121</sup> Theodore, too, found their own produce just as agreeable as European counterparts:

little by little, we expect to become as well off as your best farmers, with  
our own wine, sugar, coffee (made from wheat!), beer, fruit of all kinds...<sup>122</sup>

The Bosts perceived home-made replacement foods as new and exciting, not pale, inferior imitations. Although class pretensions may have hampered the Munchs’ appreciation of American foods, there was no necessary relationship between class

---

<sup>117</sup> Ray, *The Migrant’s Table*, 74.

<sup>118</sup> Bowen, *Frontier Family*, 130.

<sup>119</sup> Johan Storm Munch, “Vita Mea,” in Munch & Munch, *The Strange American Way*, 167; Sophie Bost, letter to Ami and Jenny Bost, 10 April, 1862, in Bowen, *Frontier Family*, 204.

<sup>120</sup> Theodore Bost, letter to Ami and Jenny Bost, August 1862, in Bowen, *Frontier Family*, 213.

<sup>121</sup> Sophie Bost, letters to Ami and Jenny Bost, 3 December, 1858; April 10, 1862; 26 April, 1862, and to Elisee Bost, 7 April, 1860, in Bowen, *Frontier Family*, 157, 158-160, 204-205, 208.

<sup>122</sup> Theodore Bost, letter to Ami and Jenny Bost, August 1862, in Bowen, *Frontier Family*, 213.

background and the individual's interpretation of his or her food situation. On the contrary, one might say that any immigrant's relationship to food can only be fully understood within the context of that person's own experiences and circumstances.

The Koepfli and Suppiger families who established the New Switzerland colony in Illinois in the early 1830s furnish another example of people who had been relatively well off in Europe and settled in a rural area still in the frontier stage. Their travel account contains one of the most detailed lists of food brought on a transatlantic voyage. It gives the impression that these were people used to abundance and variety. For example, they brought along almost 250 liters of wine and over 20 liters of liqueur, cognac, and brandy for the journey. Along with all the immigrants who were literally "hungering" for America, there were obviously also some who were used to eating and drinking well.<sup>123</sup>

The decision to emigrate was controversial in the Koepfli family. Bernard Koepfli doubted his father's decision, and pitied his mother's "cooking for a hungry mob before an open fire." In a house "worse than a pigpen in Switzerland," she had no oven and had to bake bread in iron pots.<sup>124</sup> These objections came to naught, however, at least in part because of the availability of good food. Salomon Koepfli described their acquisition of cattle, sheep, hogs, goats, and chickens, as well as the abundance of deer in the vicinity, and concluded that "our dogs consume more meat in a week than most families in Switzerland eat in an entire year."<sup>125</sup> Joseph Suppiger argued that the food was simply

---

<sup>123</sup> John C. Abbott, ed., Raymond Spahn, trans., *Journey to New Switzerland: Travel Account of the Koepfli and Suppiger Family to St. Louis on the Mississippi and the Founding of New Switzerland in the State of Illinois* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987), 77-84.

<sup>124</sup> Quoted by Salomon Koepfli in a letter to Kaspar Mauris Koepfli, 11 December, 1831, in Abbott, *Journey to New Switzerland*, 151.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

“better, more nourishing, and more suitable than in Europe.”<sup>126</sup> Dr. Kaspar Koepfli, the group’s leader, acknowledged some shortcomings with regard to beer, wine, and cheese, but described an otherwise advantageous food situation:

Americans eat well. The *average* farmer expects to be served two kinds of meat at every meal of the day, but soup is rarely served. Fresh bread for every meal is baked in iron pans. Corn bread, very popular with Americans, has come to be a favorite of the Swiss, who could not bear it at first. Butter and usually also honey are found at every meal, at least during the summer.<sup>127</sup>

This acceptance of American foodways was obviously not shared by all. Other migrants sometimes felt an intense longing for the flavors they associated with home, like this German immigrant writing from Iowa:

If only I could be with you, because such good sausage as is made in Germany is not eaten here. When I some day come home I will

---

<sup>126</sup> Joseph Suppiger, letter to Suppiger family, September 1832, in *ibid.*, 168.

<sup>127</sup> Kaspar Koepfli, “Advantages and Disadvantages of the Area We Chose to Settle,” in Abbott, *Journey to New Switzerland*, 196. Italics in original. The reliance on corn bread as a staple food reflects New Switzerland’s location in the southernmost part of Illinois, where the settlers undoubtedly were influenced by Southern food culture. By contrast, Norwegian immigrants in Blue Mounds, Wisconsin reported that corn was “rarely eaten by people.” Ragni, Sigri, and Gunild Omland, letter to Tellef Nicolaisen, 18 November, 1857, in *Land of Their Choice: The Immigrants Write Home*, ed. Theodore Blegen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955), 268. It should perhaps be noted here that it is unclear exactly to what extent the travel description and letters from New Switzerland were meant as information for family and relatives at home only, or for prospective colonists as well. There might in other words be an element of advertising in some of these statements by Suppiger and the Koepflis. See Spahn’s introduction to *Journey to New Switzerland*, xix.

arrive early enough in the fall so I can enjoy everything that is missing here. I miss the good plum cake, too.<sup>128</sup>

This longing tended to manifest itself at special times of the year, especially the Christmas holidays. Berta Kingestad wished that she

were close enough to go home and have Christmas in Bjøravåg and taste your delicious Christmas porridge. What I wouldn't give, Mother, for a few spoonfuls of that porridge and a little of your good pickled pork...<sup>129</sup>

Anna Swanson similarly remembered an American Christmas far removed from what she had grown up with in Sweden: "It was just like any other day; no lutefisk, no limpa bread, nothing. I was... so hungry for a little coffee bread, or a slice of good Swedish rye bread with Swedish butter."<sup>130</sup>

Although not everyone was as positive to American foodways as Kaspar Koepfli, all immigrants in the rural Midwest had to adapt or adjust in some way. Farmhands had to get used to the norms of the farm family, domestics had to learn how to cook according to the (often Yankee) housewife's wishes. Women who were used to having dependable servants in Europe often had to manage by themselves or deal with less deferential maids who had tasted American freedom and social equality. Gertrude Braat Vandergon recalled that when their group of Dutch immigrants arrived in Minnesota, all the women

---

<sup>128</sup> John Becker, letter to Johannes Seibold, 14 January, 1881, 3. Becker papers, Wisconsin Historical Society Archive, Madison.

<sup>129</sup> Berta Kingestad, letter to Anna Bjøravåg, 3 December, 1893, in *In Their Own Words: Letters from Norwegian Immigrants*, ed. Solveig Zempel (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 53.

<sup>130</sup> Anna Svensson Swanson, *Orphan, Immigrant, Prairie Pioneer: Memories of My Life*, ed. Marjorie Carol & Lillian Evenson (S. n., 1989), 17.

were used to having maids, and “although they planned the meals, they seldom did the cooking.” In America, they had to learn simple tasks like baking bread or making pancakes.<sup>131</sup> As Gro Svendsen put it, “life here is very different from life in our mountain valley. One must readjust oneself and learn everything all over again, even to the preparation of food.”<sup>132</sup> One example of how trying such circumstances could be was the case of Mathilde Küner, who in her early days in Sheboygan, Wisconsin had no kitchen and was forced to set up her oven outside. “I would often rather not eat food than stand outside cooking with an umbrella in my hand,” she justly complained.<sup>133</sup> Immigrant women who settled on the Great Plains often had to endure the even greater indignity of burning cowchips to heat their stoves.<sup>134</sup>

Children, too, had to adjust and learn. Soon after arriving in Ashland, Michigan, thirteen-year old Hjalmar Kjems found some bushes with “very large, red berries.” He and his friends tasted them, but found them disgusting. Only later would they learn to appreciate the flavor of tomatoes.<sup>135</sup> Other immigrant children were more disgusted by their parents’ traditional fare. Danish Alfred Frost remembered some appalling dishes: dry, hard, tasteless pumpernickel bread, awful *øllebrød*, and beef stew that made him gag.<sup>136</sup> Frederikke Johansen, on the other hand, remembered Danish foods with delight; especially from Christmases when her mother “radiated Christmas joy” as she prepared

---

<sup>131</sup> Gertrude Braat Vandergon, *Our Pioneer Days in Minnesota* (Holland, Mich.: Holland Letter Service, 1949), 24.

<sup>132</sup> Gro Svendsen, letter to her parents, 20 November, 1862, in Blegen, *Land of Their Choice*, 393.

<sup>133</sup> Mathilde Küner, letter to Veronika & Regina Kerler, 23 March, 1850, in *Pionierjahre der Deutsch-Amerikanischer Familien Frank-Kerler in Wisconsin und Michigan, 1849 – 1864*, ed. Louis F. Frank (Milwaukee: L. F. Frank, 1911), 64.

<sup>134</sup> R. Welsch & L. Welsch, *Cather’s Kitchen: Foodways in Literature and Life* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 3.

<sup>135</sup> Kjems, *Mit liv*, 5.

<sup>136</sup> Alfred Frost, *Autobiography* (Withee, Wisc.: unpubl., 1981), 2.

*æbleskiver*, Christmas porridge, sausage, and all the other things emblematic of that holiday.<sup>137</sup>

It is difficult to draw broad, general conclusions about the experiences immigrants had with food in America. To some extent, their individual stories must stand alone, irreducible, understandable only as unique events. This does not mean that we have confirmed the typically modern, individualist assumption that taste is simply arbitrary and idiosyncratic.<sup>138</sup> We know that learned practices and ideas derived from a sociocultural context are reflected in systematic variations in gastronomic preferences according to class, gender, ethnicity, religion, and other variables.<sup>139</sup> But these effects are not deterministic; they are very context-dependent and subject to change within the individual life-cycle. While psychologists remain disturbed by the fact that members of the same family often have very dissimilar food preferences,<sup>140</sup> this is not particularly surprising to a historian who has read a few stories about people stirring food into the stew of life – people with life stories, rather than demographic variables in a spreadsheet.

From the stories these immigrants told, I will try to pull out three strands of meaning, under the headings of displacement, place-making, and gustatory identity. By displacement I mean both the physical, social, and mental aspects of removing from one continent to another. We may debate whether European emigrants were displaced or simply left by choice, to a certain extent that discussion boils down to a preference for either causal or intentional explanations. Without denying the concept of “agency,” we

---

<sup>137</sup> Frederikke Johansen, *Fredelund: Skildringer fra Nybyggertiden* (Askov, Minn.: American Publishing Co., n.d.), 40-41. *Æbleskiver*, lit. apple slices, are round pastries made in a special pan.

<sup>138</sup> Mennell, *All Manners of Food*, 1.

<sup>139</sup> See, for example, Kittler & Suchler, *Food and Culture in America*, 6-9.

<sup>140</sup> Mennella & Beauchamp, “Early Development of Human Flavor Preferences,” 103-104; Rozin, “Sociocultural Influences,” 253-254.

are forced to recognize that underlying social circumstances influenced emigrants' decisions to leave Europe, and that many of those circumstances (structural economic changes, technological changes, demographic changes, military conscription, religious intolerance, political oppression) were large-scale societal processes and events over which the individual had little or no control. More importantly for our purposes, the process of displacement or migration was in itself such a process on a microscopic scale. Whenever or wherever immigrants went, they found a different environment and a different social context where simply reproducing the cultural practices of a different place would be inconvenient, imprudent, or simply impossible. Although their grandchildren or later historians could be made to believe such things possible, I have found little evidence that the immigrants themselves did. Those who did were unlikely to be successful in the rural Midwest.

Krishnendu Ray has written about his three "lands:" India, the United States, and the "everyday lands" of the kitchen, the desk, and the classroom.<sup>141</sup> European immigrants, too, had their everyday lands: woods and prairies where they shot deer and prairie chickens; pastures where livestock roamed; fields where corn and wheat grew; gardens with watermelons and cabbage; orchards with apple trees and currant bushes; and a kitchen where the produce of nature was given the imprimatur of culture. What does it mean to sit, as Gertrude Braat Vandergon's family did, on a log house floor eating from fine Dresden china? It means to have been washed ashore with the tide of history, like driftwood on the seas of the future. Food and food practices belonged to the everyday

---

<sup>141</sup> Ray, *The Migrant's Table*, 2.

lands, and could not be fully identified with either “the fatherland” or “the promised land” through the magical workings of “agency.”

This was especially true in rural America, because so much of what people ate came from the local environment, if not directly from one’s own farm, then from someone else’s. On the farm, cooking and eating also became place-making. What had once been a small square on the surveyor’s map became infused with cultural meaning when Theodore and Sophie Bost tapped the maple sap and stayed up all night to keep the kettles boiling. Within the limits of the natural environment, and with due regard for the family economy, men and women turned farmsteads into homes in part by integrating some of their old foodways into a new lifestyle. To achieve a symbolic connection between old and new home was more important than to do everything according to tradition. If you like meat, why eat meat three times a month if you can eat it three times a day? To act always and everywhere the same is contrary to human nature.

As these immigrants sought to engender a sense of place through cultivating, cooking, and eating, they also sought to define their identities by contrasting their food habits with the food habits of others. Often those others were Yankees who ate roast and cake every day, drank water instead of beer, never ate soup, knew nothing of meatballs or fruit porridge, ate only twice or thrice a day, and belched loudly even in fine hotel restaurants. Although immigrants to a great extent accepted Yankee ways as a matter of convenience, this process was rarely forced by any great desire to imitate or be like the “Americans.” They usually saw themselves as adapting to the environment, the economy, and local circumstances rather than as cultural conformists. But as this chapter has shown, defining oneself and others in terms of food is a continuous process highly



dependent on so many variables and the specific context that generalization is difficult. What remains certain is that food was a very common vehicle for efforts to understand the relationships between self and other. Through place-making and the creative negotiation of gustatory identity, immigrants took charge of their own gastronomical displacement. If the culinary world they had left behind lived on in them, it was through symbolic reminders rather than through out-of-place cultural practices.

## 2: LANDSCAPES IN THE MIND: PERCEPTION, PLACE, AND IDENTITY

In the early spring of 1856, Swiss immigrant Theodore Bost sat down to write a letter to his brother in the old country. He described his newly acquired claim in Chanhassen, Minnesota, and then launched into a scathing indictment of the American view of the natural environment:

It has been given to me only a few times in the past five years to admire nature; ordinarily it weighs upon my imagination like a heavy burden, a burden such as I never was conscious of in Switzerland. This results, I think, from being surrounded at all times by people who have no imagination nor taste. When you live among people who regret that so much water flows over Niagara Falls, making it impossible to build sawmills there, and when the same people, contemplating a beautiful forest, ask themselves whether one could fatten hogs there, you finally come to the conclusion that in their country there is nothing beautiful.<sup>142</sup>

Bost had indeed struggled to appreciate natural beauty at times. A year earlier an encounter with the Falls of St. Anthony had left him cold, and he sent a despondent letter admitting that

it is true that for some time now the beauties of nature have had little effect on me, and yet when I think of the Alps and our Swiss lakes, I often have a hard time keeping the tears from coming.<sup>143</sup>

---

<sup>142</sup> Theodore Bost, letter to Etienne Bost, 23 March, 1856, in Bowen, *Frontier Family*, 87.

Bost's lack of emotional response to American landscapes derived both from the contrasts between American and Swiss landscapes and the identification of Swiss mountains and lakes with Switzerland itself. In other words, his comments presupposed a complex set of assumptions about relationships between nature, nation, and identity.

Intellectuals had started to identify the Alps with Swiss nationality in the second half of the eighteenth century, believing that "the character of the Swiss nation found its complete expression in its untamed Alpine landscape."<sup>144</sup> The Alps were described as an environment which naturally produced virtuous, liberty-loving people; they became symbolic focal points which even more than a shared territory and history defined Swiss national identity.<sup>145</sup> Bost's outpourings echo those of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a more famous Swiss emigrant:

Oh lake, on whose shores I spent the sweet hours of my childhood,  
charming scenes where I saw for the first time the majestic and touching  
rising of the sun, where I felt the first emotions of the heart... alas, I  
shall never more see you!<sup>146</sup>

Although scholars had praised the Alps and suggested their role in Swiss development as early as the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it was not until the 1720s

---

<sup>143</sup> Theodore Bost, letter to Ami & Timothee Bost, May 26, 1855, in Bowen, *Frontier Family*, 37.

<sup>144</sup> Oliver Zimmer, "In Search of Natural Identity: Alpine Landscape and the Reconstruction of the Swiss Nation," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40 (1998), 647.

<sup>145</sup> For the following discussion of the Swiss relationship between landscape and national identity, see especially Zimmer, "In Search of Natural Identity," 637-665; see also Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 155-159.

<sup>146</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, letter to Prince Beloselski, 1775, quoted in Benjamin Barber, "How Swiss is Rousseau," *Political Theory* 13 (1985): 478.

and 1730s that Johann Jacob Scheuzer's travel descriptions and Albrecht von Haller's poem *Die Alpen* combined to provide information about the Alps and at the same time imbue them with cultural significance. In Haller's long poem, the Alps became a repository of primitive virtues that contrasted with the materialism of the outside world. In the second half of the century, the historian Johann Jakob Bodmer urged a return to this imagined world of simplicity, equality, and authenticity, while Rousseau described idyllic pastoral scenes in the hills and sublime wilderness in the mountains. The ultimate literary expression of the relationship between landscape, peasant virtues, and Swiss history arrived with Friedrich Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*, published in 1804.

The Swiss historian Oliver Zimmer has described this process as a "nationalization of nature" achieved through "context-bound" ideological activism. By projecting history or myth as well as the supposed virtues or character of the population onto a specific type of landscape, Swiss nationalist intellectuals could make strong claims for the nation's historical continuity and uniqueness. However, the connection between national identity and "national" landscapes was not fully drawn until the establishment of the modern Swiss nation-state in 1848. Eventually, the ideas linking nature to national identity found full expression in a "naturalization of the nation" which expressed the formative influences of the Alps in almost deterministic terms – the Swiss were merely products of their unifying and purifying environment. Although Switzerland by the early twentieth century was a leading industrial country where most people lived in cities and

towns rather than farming and herding in the mountains, this ideology found wide acceptance among both intellectuals and the wider public.<sup>147</sup>

This chapter is a comparative study of immigrant perceptions and aesthetic evaluations of Midwestern landscapes, drawing on the letters, diaries, travel accounts and memoirs of immigrants from many different countries. But I start out with the specific case of a Swiss immigrant because it forces us to ask what cultural, intellectual, and artistic developments in Europe caused people to imagine landscapes as being formative influences on national character and crucial elements of national identity, and, more importantly for the purposes of this dissertation, how the fusion (or confusion) of landscape aesthetics and identity affected European immigrants arriving in the Midwest.

The case of Theodore Bost and Swiss nature-nationalism suggests that how people think about landscapes and natural environments can be greatly influenced by literary, artistic, and scholarly trends. Most historians studying landscape perception have in fact worked within the confines of art history or the history of ideas, rather than approaching the topic from the angle of cultural history more broadly conceived. Most studies approaching the subject matter of “everyday” perception and judgment of landscapes have been written by psychologists or geographers, so a short summary of their findings is helpful here.

The ways in which human beings perceive and assess landscapes are culturally variable, but they also have a strong biological component. It is perhaps obvious that evolution has shaped the way our species experiences the natural environment. To some,

---

<sup>147</sup> Zimmer, “In Search of Natural Identity,” 637-660.

the often observed longing for the sea or the forest even represents hidden memories of our pre-human ancestors:

The bush apes ancestral to man gradually worked farther from the forest. They took the sea eye out of the gloaming and into the radiance of the open day, though not without some enduring nostalgia [...] Restfulness to the eyes and temperament, unspoken mythological and psychic attachments, remain part of the forest's contribution to the human personality.<sup>148</sup>

Although statements of pre-human legacies as far-reaching as these are rare in the literature, references to the African savanna life of early humans and their immediate hominid ancestors occur frequently. On the savanna, humans searched for water, sought out prominences that could be used as vantage points, and identified the bright colors of flowers with potential foods. It is no coincidence, argue biologists and psychologists, that present-day humans, too, prefer places with water, peaks, and vegetation. More generally, humans tend to prefer natural environments to built ones, and to have a love for nature that is independent of “extrinsic reasons.”<sup>149</sup> This human trait has been called “biophilia,” a “fundamental, genetically based human need and propensity to affiliate with life.”<sup>150</sup>

---

<sup>148</sup> Paul Shephard, *Man in the Landscape: A Historic View of the Esthetics of Nature* (New York: Knopf, 1967), 22.

<sup>149</sup> R. Kaplan & S. Kaplan, *The Experience of Nature: A Psychological Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 1.

<sup>150</sup> Peter H. Kahn, Jr., *The Human Relationship with Nature: Development and Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), 9. The term “biophilia” was first used by psychobiologist E. O. Wilson, see S. Clayton & S. Opatow, “Introduction,” in *Identity and the Natural Environment: The Psychological Significance of Nature*, ed. Clayton & Opatow (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003), 7.

Since we are visual and spatial in orientation, as well as highly emotional beings, we tend to feel strongly about the landscapes that surround us.<sup>151</sup>

At the same time, people come to their environment with certain preconceptions. Some psychologists go so far as to say that one experiences nature in a certain way “because one chooses to see it that way.”<sup>152</sup> In other words, landscape perception is a matter of imagination and artifice rather than just genetic predisposition or a simple response to external stimuli. Perception and cognition are not separate, but interrelated, as are perception and memory. In our consciousness, each place is linked to certain conceptions of the activities, objects, and social relationships that “belong” to that place. Space is not homogeneous, but demarcated by certain features that give different spaces different social and cultural meanings. As psychologists invariably point out, each landscape possesses an overwhelming amount of information, leading to a process of selecting those features that matter to the individual perceiver. Simply observing the environment passively is impossible; it surrounds us and imposes a series of perceptual responses. Immediate affective responses and efforts toward orientation are thus followed by categorization and systematization based on our own goals, expectations, and needs

---

<sup>151</sup> Kaplan & Kaplan, *The Experience of Nature*, 6; see also Roger Ulrich, “Aesthetic and Affective Response to Natural Environment,” in *Behavior and the Natural Environment*, ed. I. Altman & J. Wohlwill (New York: Plenum Press, 1983), 85-125; James L. Sell et al., “Toward a Theoretical Framework for Landscape Perception,” in *Environmental Perception and Behavior: An Inventory and Prospect*, ed. Thomas F. Saarinen et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Department of Geography Research Paper no. 209, 1984), 61-83; T. Hartig & G. Evans, “Psychological Foundations of Nature Experience,” in *Behavior and Environment: Psychological and Geographical Approaches*, ed. T. Garling & R. Golledge (New York: Elsevier Science, 1993), 437.

<sup>152</sup> William H. Ittelson, “Environment Perception and Contemporary Perceptual Theory,” in *Environment and Cognition*, ed. Ittelson (New York: Seminar Press, 1973), 18.

for knowledge and meaning. In the words of Paul Shepard, “the environment is encountered in a way in which self and place are related.”<sup>153</sup>

The findings of psychologists and geographers suggest that experiencing ourselves within an environment is a “total event” where rigid separation of self and environment is impossible. When we encounter a landscape, the experience is framed by anticipation, and it forces participation, affective response, and cognitive processing. Just as there is no possibility of passive observation, there is no possibility of aesthetic neutrality. In what they called a “process model”, Ervin Zube and colleagues moved toward studying landscape perception as an outcome of a process of interaction between humans and landscapes.<sup>154</sup>

Ongoing interactions with the natural environment affect individual identities. Since identity is especially fluid in a migratory context, immigrants’ encounters with new environments in the process of migration and re-settlement have a special salience and seem especially worthy of closer examination. If we accept that perception is neither purely subjective nor purely objective in nature, we also need to ask what the range of

---

<sup>153</sup> Shepard, *Man in the Landscape*, 34. This paragraph draws heavily on Ittelson, “Environment Perception and Contemporary Perceptual Theory,” 1-19; but see also idem et al., *An Introduction to Environmental Psychology* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1974), 102-125; Joseph Sonnenfeld, “Multidimensional Measurement of Environmental Personality,” in *Spatial Choice and Spatial Behavior: Geographic Essays on the Analysis of Preferences and Perceptions*, ed. Golledge & G. Rushton (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1976), 51-53; Gary Backhaus, “Introduction,” in *Tensional Landscapes: The Dynamics of Boundaries and Placements*, ed. idem & J. Murungi (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2003), xi-xxix; Terence Lee, *Psychology and the Environment* (London: Methuen, 1976), 35-37; N. Heimstra & L. McFarling, *Environmental Psychology* (Monterey, Cal.: Brooks/Cole Publ. Co., 1974), 143; Joachim Wohlwill, “The Concept of Nature: A Psychologist’s View,” in Altman & Wohlwill, *Behavior and the Natural Environment*, 29; Sell et al., “Toward a Theoretical Framework,” 61-83; Thomas F. Saarinen, “The Use of Projective Techniques in Geographic Research,” in Ittelson, *Environment and Cognition*, 29-30.

<sup>154</sup> Ervin Zube, “Landscape Research: Planned and Serendipitous,” in *Environment and Behavior Studies: Emergence of Intellectual Traditions*, ed. Altman & K. Christensen (New York: Plenum Press, 1990), 291-313; Sell et al., “Toward a Theoretical Framework;” Ittelson et al., *Introduction to Environmental Psychology*, 102-125; idem, “Environmental Perception and Contemporary Perceptual Theory;” Lee, *Psychology and the Environment*, 35-37.



intersubjective and intercultural variability is in landscape perception. To the psychobiologist, both human landscape preferences and the general fondness for nature represent evolutionary adaptation. In the most extreme versions of this line of thinking, all aesthetic pleasure related to observing or being in a given natural environment can be described simply as a response to certain landscape features associated with survival. Roger Ulrich has argued that humans are in broad agreement in their aesthetic judgments, and that our first responses to a landscape are feelings rather than thoughts. Thus, since people in general have the same affective response to the same landscapes, little variation across time and space can be expected, and even the individual's previous experiences have little impact on evaluations of the natural environment.<sup>155</sup>

Accepting Ulrich's deterministic position would render this chapter virtually meaningless. However, the evidence for variability in human landscape preferences is now so great that few would be willing to maintain that none exists. Even if we focus merely on the synchronic evidence of psychological and anthropological studies, thus ignoring for the moment the diachronic evidence uncovered by historians (to be discussed below), there can be little doubt that landscape perception varies from person to person and from culture to culture. Ethnoecological research, which seeks out native terms for ecological features in order to discover the criteria used to distinguish and label those features, has shown that different peoples have different ways of perceiving the environment and organizing their perceptions. Psychological testing using pictures of

---

<sup>155</sup> Ulrich, "Aesthetic and Affective Response to Natural Environment;" see also Clayton & Opatow, "Introduction;" Jay Appleton, *The Experience of Landscape* (New York: Wiley, 1996).

different landscapes have revealed that landscape preferences vary according to sex, age, ethnicity, education, environmental experiences, values, and personality.<sup>156</sup>

In light of this evidence, the approach taken in this chapter most closely resembles what has been called a phenomenological approach, where landscape perception is seen as “an intimate encounter between a person and the environment,” the nature of which depends on a variety of factors: the individual’s past experiences and life history, sensitivity to landscape aesthetics, attitudes, intentions, and motivations.<sup>157</sup> The emphasis is not on perception narrowly defined as sensory experience, but as a process intertwined with cognition, memory, and emotions.

Like scholars in other disciplines, historians have found that perceptions of natural beauty have varied greatly across time and space. Throughout most of the Christian era, Western ideas about nature have been strikingly different from non-Western notions. While Chinese and Japanese art, poetry, and philosophy dealt extensively with landscapes and natural environments, Western civilization in the medieval and early modern periods was generally characterized by anthropocentrism and an ambivalence or even disdain for nature. In the dualistic Christian worldview, man was distinctly separate from nature. Nature was God’s creation, but it was a “fallen” creation despoiled by the Flood. Irregular landscapes and dramatic weather were considered manifestations of a sinful, corrupt world. Even European intellectuals viewed woods,

---

<sup>156</sup> Emilio F. Moran, *Human Adaptability: An Introduction to Ecological Anthropology* (Belmont, Cal.: Wadsworth, 1979); Roy Ellen, “Variation and Uniformity in the Construction of Biological Knowledge Across Cultures,” in *Nature Across Cultures: Views of Nature and the Environment in Non-Western Cultures*, ed. Helaine Selin (Boston, Mass.: Kluwer Academic, 2003), 47-74; Zube, “Landscape Research;” Sonnenfeld, “Multidimensional Measurement of Environmental Personality.”

<sup>157</sup> T. Daniel & J. Vining, “Methodological Issues in the Assessment of Landscape Quality,” in Altman & Wohlwill, *Behavior and the Natural Environment*, 72.

mountains, and the sea with fear, hostility, and repulsion. In more popular understandings, the end of the cultivated field was the border of a dangerous realm inhabited by fierce predators, natural and supernatural. A wide variety of terrifying mythical beings, along with witches, evil spirits, and demons, were believed to dwell in mountains, lakes, and forests.<sup>158</sup>

Although attitudes toward the environment began to change during the Renaissance, most utterances about wilderness and untamed nature were still hostile in the seventeenth century. Englishmen in both England and New England thought forests were “uncouth” and “terrible.”<sup>159</sup> Andrew Marvell, John Dryden, and Daniel Defoe abhorred mountains, and Thomas Burnet’s *Sacred Theory of the Earth*, published in the 1680s, set out to demonstrate that irregular and rocky landscapes represented God’s displeasure with mankind. John Evelyn thought that “nature has swept up the rubbish of the earth in the Alps.”<sup>160</sup> In the seventeenth century, landscape painting depicted

---

<sup>158</sup> Clarence Glacken, “Reflections on the History of Western Attitudes to Nature,” in *Nature and Identity in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, ed. A. Buttimer & L. Wallin (Boston, Mass.: Kluwer, 1999), 1-17; D. G. Charlton, *New Images of the Natural in France: A Study in European Cultural History, 1750 – 1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 2-6; Emily Brady, *Aesthetics of the Natural Environment* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003), 29-31; Shepard, *Man in the Landscape*, 131; I. G. Simmons, *Interpreting Nature: Cultural Constructions of the Environment* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 11; Charles Warren, “Wilderness,” in *Patterned Ground: Entanglements of Nature and Culture*, ed. Stephan Harrison et al. (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), 139; John R. Short, *Imagined Country: Environment, Culture and Society* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 6-8. For East Asian conceptions of the natural environment, see John A. Tucker, “Japanese Views of Nature and the Environment,” in Selin, *Nature Across Cultures*, 161-183; John Berthrong, “Confucian Views of Nature,” in Selin, *Nature Across Cultures*, 373-392; Hajime Nakamura, “Ideas of Nature in East Asian Lands,” in Buttimer & Wallin, *Nature and Identity in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, 19-49; M. Senda, “Japan’s Traditional View of Nature and Interpretation of Landscape,” in Buttimer & Wallin, *Nature and Identity in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, 51-61.

<sup>159</sup> Short, *Imagined Country*, 8.

<sup>160</sup> Quoted in Charlton, *New Images of the Natural*, 42.

idealized, ordered environments with a strong human presence, and gardens were formal and symmetrical, exhibiting man's dominion over nature.<sup>161</sup>

As late as the 1770s Samuel Johnson described mountains as “matter, incapable of form or usefulness, dismissed by nature from her care and disinherited of her favours....”<sup>162</sup> However, this view was no longer backed by a consensus in Western discourse. Historians agree that the eighteenth century was a dramatic turning point in the way Europeans looked at the natural environment. There was a reaction to extreme materialist and utilitarian understandings of nature, and mountains and wilderness began to be celebrated and admired. Whereas in the seventeenth century human society had been the only proper subject of art, painters and poets of the eighteenth century worked to depict the natural environment. Gardens, although still heavily managed, became less formal and allowed for greater irregularity. Philosophers and scientists of the eighteenth century were almost obsessed with nature and the “natural.” In England, Germany, Switzerland, and France, the educated elites embraced pastoral beauty and toured the continent looking for prospect views that had become associated with “heightened awareness” and “enlarged vision.”<sup>163</sup> The most notable figure in this development was Rousseau, who emphasized man's psychological and sentimental response to nature and the potential harmony between man and environment in an idyllic, pastoral setting. Rousseau also described mountain environments, terrifying to some, with “those kinds of

---

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 18-43; Short, *Imagined Country*, 15; Christopher Thacker, *The Wildness Pleases: The Origins of Romanticism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983)

<sup>162</sup> Quoted in Short, *Imagined Country*, 16.

<sup>163</sup> Jacqueline M. Labbe, *Romantic Visualities: Landscape, Gender and Romanticism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), x.

beauty which please only sensitive souls.”<sup>164</sup> Along with Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant, Rousseau thus laid the foundation for an appreciation of the sublime, “the exhilarating terror inspired by rushing torrents, roaring waterfalls, precipitous crags, unattainable mountain peaks.”<sup>165</sup> In addition, William Gilpin and others introduced the idea of the picturesque landscape: rough, rugged, broken, weather-worn, and stained by time. Thus, by 1800, a fundamental change (some have called it a revolution) had taken place in the way European artists and intellectuals thought about nature. Poets wrote adoringly of the Swiss Alps, and Rousseau and Denis Diderot wrote about the goodness of nature and the corruption and oppression of society.<sup>166</sup>

As pre-Romanticism turned into full-fledged Romanticism at the turn of the nineteenth century, poets and artists refused to conceive of nature simply as matter exerting force according to universal laws. Instead, they infused nature with a wide range of spiritual qualities. Romanticism also celebrated uniqueness over universality, endowing distinctive landscapes with unique meanings. It was here that ideas about landscape and nation, place and identity, began to converge. In the eighteenth century, the German thinker Johan Gottfried von Herder had posited the idea of a unique *Volksgeist*, a folk spirit which defined each people as unique. Since each people was separated from every other people by this mystical quality, different peoples should live “next to each other, not through and over each other,” as Herder put it.<sup>167</sup> One people, one

---

<sup>164</sup> Quoted in Charlton, *New Images of the Natural*, 47.

<sup>165</sup> Hugh Honour, *Romanticism* (London: Allen Lane, 1979), 57-58.

<sup>166</sup> See especially Thacker, *The Wildness Pleases*; Charlton, *New Images of the Natural*, and Brady, *Aesthetic of the Natural Environment*, 32-43. See also Smith, *Chosen Peoples*, 131; Glacken, “Reflections.”

<sup>167</sup> Quoted in Bernd Schönemann, “Vom Westfälischen Frieden bis zum Wiener Kongress,” under the entry “Volk, Nation, Nationalismus, Masse,” in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexicon zur*

fatherland, and both ideally separated from other people by boundaries conceived not as political, but “natural.” As German intellectuals in the early nineteenth century responded to the onslaught of Napoleon’s armies and bureaucratic machinery, they saw the foundation of Germany’s revival and political unification in a nurturing of the *Volksgeist*, in a program of national education which would make history national history, literature national literature, and geography national geography, re-enforced by a “poetic geography” already germinating in the works of German Romantic poets. Traveling over the Thuringian mountains and across the Rhine River on his way to Paris, Friedrich Schlegel “discovered” Germany, and recognized in the Rhine “the all-too-faithful image of our fatherland, our history and our character.”<sup>168</sup> Despite the Rhine’s long history as a transnational highway of communication and commerce, Schlegel’s *Am Rheine* began a process of making the river into a national icon. To Ernst Moritz Arndt, the Rhine was “Germany’s river,” and German patriots proceeded to write more than 400 songs about it in the decade of the 1840s alone.<sup>169</sup>

This process of defining a national landscape repeated itself throughout Europe and its overseas offshoots. In the United States, for example, landscape painters and their affluent patrons embarked on a project of “grounding nationalism in nature.”<sup>170</sup> It became a “national duty” to admire the Hudson River Valley and show it off to foreigners, and

---

*politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. Otto Brunner et al., vol. 7 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1992), 318.

<sup>168</sup> Hans Kohn, *Prelude to Nation-States: The French and German Experience, 1789 – 1815* (Princeton, N. J.: Van Nostrand, 1967), 182.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., Mark Cicc, “The Political Ecology of the Rhine,” in *Nature in German History*, ed. Christof Mauch (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), 31-35; Smith, *Chosen Peoples*, Elizabeth Holsinger, *Rural Scenes and National Representation: Britain, 1815 – 1850* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1997).

<sup>170</sup> Angela Miller, *Landscape Representation and American Cultural Politics, 1825 – 1875* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993), 3.

Thomas Cole's paintings often depicted "empty" landscapes that suggested the freedom and opportunity promised to (white) Americans. Although Yi-Fu Tuan has argued that "the epic of the westward migration and settlement of the American continent is the antithesis of the sentiment and ideal of rootedness in native soil," Angela Miller has shown that Frederic Church and others of his generation made it their mission to "give to nationalism an organic basis, to root it in the geography of the continent."<sup>171</sup> Something similar happened in Russia, where exactly those features that had traditionally been viewed as the least attractive – the vast, uninhabited, inhospitable spaces – came to be revered as the "national terrain" in novels, verse, painting, and eventually, popular culture.<sup>172</sup>

What Anthony D. Smith has called a "territorialization of memory" connected certain places with historical memories and imbued them with moral as well as aesthetic significance. Thus nature, or more specifically select "national landscapes" became part of a nation's past, and history in turn became part of nature – the people of the nation had been shaped by the nature that defined them. Thus land and people merged in imagined "ethnoscapes." In Scotland, for example, the Highlands became the nation's "badge of singularity," and the barren, desolate landscapes painted by Horatio McCulloch were

---

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 167; Yi-Fu Tuan, "Geopietry: A Theme in Man's Attachment to Nature and to Place," in *Geographies of the Mind: Essays in Historical Geography*, ed. D. Lowenthal & M. J. Bowden (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 29.

<sup>172</sup> Christopher Ely, *This Meager Nature: Landscape and National Identity in Imperial Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002). For the American case, see also Stephen Daniels, *Fields of Vision: Landscape Imagery and National Identity in England and the United States* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993); Thomas R. Dunlap, "Creation and Destruction in Landscapes of Empire," in *City, Country, Empire: Landscapes in Environmental History*, ed. J. M. Diefendorf & K. Doney (Pittsburgh, Penn.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005), 207-225. It is far beyond the scope of this chapter to enter into a larger discussion of the meaning of the environment and the frontier to American historical development and identity, I mention the case of the U. S. here simply to illustrate a larger phenomenon in nineteenth-century Western culture.

accepted as representing what was archetypically Scottish. The mountains described as “monstrous Excrescences” in the early eighteenth century had by the nineteenth century become icons of a newly constructed identity. Similarly, Norwegian painters Adolf Tidemand and Hans Gude painted peasants in festive costumes in spectacular fjord-and-mountain settings, thus representing both the authentic folk spirit and the unique and formative features of the Norwegian landscape. Slovak artists and poets identified the enduring qualities of the Slovak people with the Tatra mountains, and Hungarian intellectuals sought national uniqueness in the flat, arid plains of the *puszta*.<sup>173</sup>

Landscapes, in this conception of nature, were not so much the microenvironments concretely encountered by individual human beings, but rather larger-than-life symbols of a nation and the relationship between land, people, and identity. Actually experienced environments were subsumed under the over-arching category of a national landscape. Thus Theodore Bost could write:

Every Sunday I think about Bellevue. Once I was on my way to spend the Sabbath on Mount Mussi, and my heart suddenly contracted in anticipation of the thought that some day I should have to leave that beautiful country. In calm, clear weather we could hear the bells of Thonon and Evian, which made the beauty of the lake and of the Alps even more awesome and magnificent. How lovely our Switzerland is,

---

<sup>173</sup> Smith, *Chosen Peoples*; John Morrison, *Identity and Nationalism in Scottish Painting, 1800 – 1920* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003); Charles Withers, “Contested Visions: Nature, Culture, and the Morality of Landscape in the Scottish Highlands,” in Buttimer & Wallin, *Nature and Identity in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, 271-286, Zimmer, “In Search of Natural Identity,” Helsinger, *Rural Scenes and National Representation*.



Marie – don't you agree?<sup>174</sup>

But although educated and sensitive people like Theodore Bost described and evaluated natural beauty with some regularity, most immigrants were in fact more like the very practical-minded Americans he so roundly criticized. The following paragraph, from the same letter, is more typical of immigrant sentiment:

The natural beauty of America is much inferior, but this country is also beautiful in some ways [...] I have found it to be entirely different from what I had thought it would be. But what good does it do to complain. I hope that in a few years I'll have a lot of money.<sup>175</sup>

The Norwegian pastor A. G. Fredrickson was well aware of this tension between aesthetic and more pragmatic ways of evaluating the natural environment. Traveling through parts of Minnesota, he saw

areas that, in beauty and charm, surpassed anything I had previously seen in either the Southern or the Northern states, even the artful and gorgeous areas I saw in England; yes, I don't think that it is saying too much, when I say, they could even be compared to the picturesque nature of Norway.<sup>176</sup>

---

<sup>174</sup> Theodore Bost, letter to Marie Bost, 7 September, 1855, in Bowen, *Frontier Family*, 59.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> A. G. Fredrickson, "Beretning om en reise gjennem en stor del af det midterste og vestlige af Minnesota og flere Norsk Evangelisk Lutherske Menigheders Opprettelse," in *Norse Immigrant Letters: Glimpses of Norse Immigrant Life in the Northwest in the Fifties*, trans. & ed. Richard B. Eide (Minneapolis: Lutheran Free Church Publ. Co., 1925), 33.

But as the pastor readily admitted, “the emigrants do not care as much about lovely prospects as they do about knowing whether the area they are going to can be of advantage to them.”<sup>177</sup> In Lori Ann Lahlum’s study of Norwegian-American women’s encounters with the northern prairies and plains, she found that only fourteen of more than five hundred letters appraised the landscape from an aesthetic perspective. Norwegian immigrant women interpreted the landscape from an agricultural point of view, and were mostly concerned with the land’s agricultural potential and the type of work they would have to do.<sup>178</sup> This was the case with other European immigrants to the rural Midwest as well; they had come to America to make a living and sought land suitable for farming and settlement.

But although most immigrants may have kept their aesthetic judgments of the Midwestern landscapes they encountered to themselves, there were also some for whom the natural beauty (or lack of such) in their new environments played an important role. Frederikke Johansen’s family settled at first in the woodlands of West Denmark, Wisconsin and later on the prairie in Elk Horn, Iowa. But “the forest had them in its power,” as she wrote in her memoir. Underneath the leaves, smelling the rich forest air, the forest enclosed and embraced them, telling them “welcome home.” Her father bought the farm they christened *Fredelund* (Peaceful Grove), and they returned to the Wisconsin woodlands.<sup>179</sup>

---

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Lori Ann Lahlum, “*There Are No Trees Here: Norwegian Women Encounter the Northern Prairies and Plains* (unpubl. dissertation, University of Idaho, 2003).

<sup>179</sup> Frederikke Johansen, *Fredelund: Skildringer fra Nybyggertiden* (Askov, Minn.: American Publishing Co., n. d.), 10-11.

Yet the tension between aesthetics and more pragmatic considerations was present even on the Fredelund homestead. A beautiful, broad stream traversed the green, forested slopes, but Johansen's father eventually had to dam it up to protect the crops from flooding. He promised to tear down the dam as soon as he could afford to, but, perhaps unsurprisingly, he never did.<sup>180</sup>

Those immigrants who settled on the Great Plains may have had the most difficulty evaluating and adapting to a new kind of landscape. L. C. Laursen had lived most of his life near the sea and among great forests in Jutland. Arriving in Nebraska in 1924, he enjoyed traveling through the sand hills. It was a poor and desolate region, but nevertheless varied and beautiful. There, in the "great Nebraska sand ocean," he saw the "face of the earth," as God had sculpted it with cheeks and dimples, a smiling, laughing terrain testifying to the greatness of Creation. But as the train passed through the sand hills and stopped at Alliance, he knew that he was somewhere completely different. The golden sun shone across an endless, brownish, flat plain, and the forty-one miles to his new home were so endless, so treeless, so empty that he could feel nothing but despair. He counted sixteen trees in those forty-one miles, and the houses were few and "far, horribly far" between: "I began to sense a heavy melancholy. I felt that here was a great tract of earth forgotten by Our Lord."<sup>181</sup>

For weeks, Laursen struggled with melancholy and stimulus deprivation in a landscape that overwhelmed him with its homogeneous, boundless emptiness. Then, one morning at dawn, he was driving his only cow home for milking. All of a sudden he saw

---

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>181</sup> L. C. Laursen, "Min Hjemstavn," lecture at St. Stefans Danske Evangeliske Lutherske Kirke, Chicago, 1928. Laursen papers, Danish Immigrant Archives.

a long lake, surrounded by trees and houses – water, vegetation, civilization, all the things he had missed so much! A moment later the lake, the trees, and the houses were gone. It had all been a mirage. Nevertheless, that vision was a comfort on the empty plain, and as Laursen told the story, it returned to him several times in the years that followed. In the strange environment of the plains, even a hallucination could soothe the soul and fortify a lonely man's determination.<sup>182</sup>

Sometimes the depictions immigrants gave of Midwestern landscapes were outright dystopian. From Iowa, Andreas Wormser described a terrible contrast with his Dutch homeland:

You leave a country where everything is well ordered and beautiful and come here to a wasteland [...] Where people usually settle it is a monotonous woodland. The trees are chopped down, the stumps are not exactly a pretty sight to see, and it will take years to get rid of them. If one has cleared and broken up land... there is not a tree in the area. Just imagine a large tract of farm land that is completely bare and flat, and without even a single tree; more or less in the center of the land stands a house...<sup>183</sup>

Notwithstanding the pleasures and hardships derived simply from being in unfamiliar surroundings, material success and survival probably mattered most to the

---

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Andreas Wormser to J. A. Wormser, 20 February, 1849, in *Iowa Letters: Dutch Immigrants on the American Frontier*, comp. J. Stellingwerff, ed. R. Swierenga, trans. W. Lagerwey (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 292.

majority of immigrants. Despite the common notion that European peasants had a precapitalist mentality, they often appeared crassly capitalist in their evaluation of land. Men, in particular, usually discussed the land in terms of investment, marketing, labor costs, indebtedness, and short-term profits, not in terms of agrarian stewardship or long-term ecological viability.

In such writings, aesthetic judgments, if present at all, were often difficult to disentangle from the predominant perspective on land as a commodity. Perhaps the most influential piece of immigrant literature in the nineteenth century was Gottfried Duden's *Report on a Journey to the Western States of America*. Duden described America as a new Eden, a place combining freedom, opportunity, and beauty:

It is extremely alluring to settle down in regions where one has such complete freedom of choice; where one, map in hand, can roam through beautiful nature of hundreds of miles in order to select land and its cover of woods and meadows according to one's own desires. Here attractive qualities are united with useful ones.<sup>184</sup>

The useful qualities were usually most important. As Kaspar Koepfli explained in his account of the settlement of New Switzerland, Illinois, the preference for an Illinois location (despite the original plan to purchase land in Missouri) was strongly influenced by "the richness of the soil on the prairie compared with that of land in Missouri, which is

---

<sup>184</sup> Quoted in Kronenberg, *Lives and Letters*, 31-32.

wooded.”<sup>185</sup> But Koepfli added that even if the Missouri woodlands had possessed the same productive capabilities, “the prairies of Illinois still would be preferable to the dark, somber, and definitely less healthful woodlands.”<sup>186</sup> Agricultural fertility seems to have done much to enhance the aesthetic evaluation of a place. “You mustn’t think of America as a wilderness or nothing but shrubs and bushes and mountains,” wrote Johann Bauer from Princeton, Illinois; the new country had large areas with “lovely fruitful hilly prairies or plains.”<sup>187</sup> While some immigrants longed for trees on the prairies and plains, a German settler in Maple Grove, Michigan, welcomed the disappearance of the woods and thought it “wonderfully picturesque” to see “the beautiful wheat, oat, corn, and potato fields growing so lushly.”<sup>188</sup> It is much rarer to find an account praising a landscape despite its shortcomings as agricultural land.

Apart from the monetary value and agricultural potential of the land, other aspects beyond the merely aesthetic also influenced immigrants’ judgments about the landscapes they encountered. Many commented on the weather, especially on the severe weather common in the American interior. Olaus Fredrik Duus and his wife Sophie, newly settled in Wisconsin, enjoyed the spectacular thunderstorms, but agreed that “except for the lightning nothing is as beautiful here as in Norway.”<sup>189</sup> Anna Larson, who otherwise thought the Michigan climate similar to Sweden’s, also noted the extreme thunderstorms

---

<sup>185</sup> Kaspar Koepfli, “Advantages and Disadvantages of the Area We Chose to Settle,” in Abbott, *Journey to New Switzerland*, 189.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Johann Bauer, letter to his parents and siblings, 10 June, 1855, in Kamphoefner et al., *News from the Land of Freedom*, 155.

<sup>188</sup> Franz Josef Löwen, letter to his siblings, 20 May, 1877, in Kamphoefner et al., *News from the Land of Freedom*, 191.

<sup>189</sup> Olaus Fredrik Duus, letter to family in Norway, 16 May, 1856, in *Frontier Parsonage: The Letters of Olaus Fredrik Duus, Norwegian Pastor in Wisconsin, 1855 – 1858*, ed. Theodore C. Blegen (Northfield, Minn.: Norwegian American Historical Association, 1947), 25.

with violent rain, wind, and lightning.<sup>190</sup> Johannes Kerler, Jr., wrote that the weather in America was unhealthy, windy, and extreme. “We have the summer of Italy and the winter of Norway,” he complained.<sup>191</sup> Boy Yessen found the Nebraska heat difficult to bear at first, but later came to believe that the state’s climate was very healthy. It even changed the time the young needed to reach maturity, he thought: “Children are fully grown at 13 or 14 years of age.”<sup>192</sup>

The most common complaints were about extreme cold in the winter and extreme heat in the summer and during the harvest season. At least Midwestern settlers did not suffer the same intense heat as one Danish settler in Texas, who claimed that the normal summer temperature there was “around sixty degrees Celsius in the shade” (equivalent to 140 degrees Fahrenheit).<sup>193</sup> It is easy to exaggerate about exotic locations when the audience is far away, but the heat was a real threat to human health when outdoors, manual labor was the norm and no air-conditioned refuge existed. Ole Birkeland remembered that a fellow laborer, Ole Jensen, once appeared to be dying from sunstroke. He was only “saved” by a pint of brandy rushed to the scene. The young Norwegian came to, and expressed a craving for sour milk. A near-death experience in a strange environment caused the farmhand to long for one of the comforts of the homeland.<sup>194</sup>

---

<sup>190</sup> Anna Larson, letter to family in Sweden, 22 July, 1883, in *Mom’s Letters Home*, ed. & trans. Esther Larson (unpubl., 1971), 14.

<sup>191</sup> Johannes Kerler, Jr., letter to August Frank, 27 March, 1850, in Louis F. Frank, *Pionierjahre der Deutsch-Amerikanischen Familien Frank-Kerler in Wisconsin und Michigan, 1849 – 1864* (Milwaukee, Wisc.: L. F. Frank, 1911), 65-68, quote on p. 68.

<sup>192</sup> Boy Yessen, *Fra Slesvig til Nebraska, En Dansk Udvandrerers Oplevelser under tre Flag* (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske, 1952), 153-155, quote on p. 155.

<sup>193</sup> A letter to *Vendsyssel Tidende*, reprinted in *Danes in North America*, ed. Frederick Hale (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), 49.

<sup>194</sup> Ole Andreas Olsen Birkeland, *Autobiography* (unpubl., n. d.), 4.

Many immigrants described the natural environment as dangerous. Settlers in poorly drained areas frequently succumbed to malaria. America-letters often mentioned the presence of snakes and wolves, although in many cases in a re-assuring rather than alarmist way. A letter from Estherville, Iowa described the land as “beautiful and fertile,” and assured Norwegian readers that there were no alligators or crocodiles in nearby rivers.<sup>195</sup> Along with wild animals there were wild men, “savages,” in the landscape. These indigenous people the immigrants generally regarded with suspicion, fear, and a variable mixture of indifference and hostility.

Midwestern landscapes were landscapes of hope and landscapes of fear, and the hopes and fears of immigrants were often projected onto the natural setting. Female immigrants in particular seemed to grow more content with the environment as they ordered and domesticated what they conceived of as wilderness. After two years in Westphalia, Missouri, Henriette Bruns thought spring almost as beautiful as in the old Westphalia, “I welcome it much more than I did last year; it is much prettier. Our farm is getting more friendly every day.”<sup>196</sup> Barbro Ramseth proudly described the transformation of her surroundings on the farm in Wisconsin. Ten years earlier, there had been no trees, but now they had “over twenty apple trees of different kinds and other trees, so we have a nice little garden.”<sup>197</sup>

Both men and women exhibited an attachment to the ideal of the garden, where the forces of wild nature were allowed ordered expression through the organizing power

---

<sup>195</sup> Ole Nielsen, letter to his parents and siblings, 31 October, 1866, in Blegen, *Land of Their Choice*, 414.

<sup>196</sup> Henriette Bruns, letter to Heinrich Geisberg, 21 April, 1838, in *Hold Dear, As Always: Jette, A German Immigrant Life in Letters*, ed. A. Schroeder & C. Schulz-Geisberg (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1988), 85.

<sup>197</sup> Barbro Ramseth, letter to relatives, 1903, in Zempel, *In Their Own Words*, 126.



of human artifice. Franz Josef Löwen celebrated this process of “making an American wilderness into a fruitful place and a wonderful garden,” but admitted that it took “a tremendous amount of hard work, patience, and stamina.”<sup>198</sup> When Hans Gasmann wanted to describe his beautiful homestead, he wrote that the nearby lake and oak trees made it look “almost like a garden.”<sup>199</sup> There were, however, some dissenters who in truly Romantic fashion saw more beauty in wilderness than in ordered landscapes. Theodor van Dreveltdt found no pristine woods along the lower Missouri; the river valley had “lost what in Europe is called beautiful in the process of settlement. It now looks more like your parks.”<sup>200</sup> But some great cottonwoods, sycamores, oaks, and walnut trees had been spared the axe, and continued to elicit “a sense of wonder and a somber feeling.”<sup>201</sup> Still, most immigrants to the rural Midwest felt more secure in the ordered, homey realm of domesticated nature. Pastor Fredrickson was appalled by the “fearsome wet marshlands” of southern Minnesota,<sup>202</sup> and Caja Munch described unmanaged woods with obvious revulsion:

The forests here look horrible. Here and there you can see a huge oak, but the greater part of them are burnt black from prairie fires, or they are torn and broken by storms [...] in other places, it is so torn and so covered with dead trees

---

<sup>198</sup> Löwen, letter to relatives, 1883 (?) in Kamphoefner, *News from the Land of Freedom*, 196.

<sup>199</sup> Hans Gasmann, letter to his brothers-in-law and son-in-law, 18 October, 1843, in Blegen, *Land of Their Choice*, 84.

<sup>200</sup> Theodore van Dreveltdt, letter to his brother, sister, and brother-in-law, 9 June, 1845, in Kronenberg, *Lives and Letters*, 53.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Fredrickson, “Beretning,” 33.

and branches that it looks like the most horrible wilderness.<sup>203</sup>

There were obviously many different ways of looking at nature. No history of immigrants' landscape perception would be complete without considering the strong interest in fertility and agricultural potential, climate and weather, and environmental dangers such as disease, poisonous plants, and wild animals. Nor should the persistent desire of many immigrants to master and domesticate the landscape by clearing forests, draining swamps, damming streams, and planting crops, trees, and flowers be ignored. However, there were also some immigrants who looked to the natural environment for aesthetic pleasure, to create a sense of belonging, and to forge some emotional or symbolic connection with landscapes they had left behind.

Even immigrants who left Europe at an early age often had vivid and detailed memories of childhood surroundings. William Henry Messerschmidt departed from the Duchy of Brunswick at the age of five, but sixty years later he still remembered the house, the garden, the small brook, the plum trees, the meadows and fields, the little hill, and the pines, beeches, and oaks in the landscape of his toddler years.<sup>204</sup> Frank Vlcek, who left Bohemia at age seventeen, went back to visit thirty-two years later. Even before he arrived, he could see the places he had roamed in his youth: "In my mind's eye I saw every path and byway, every clod and stone, every tree in the forest that stood about our village, which had once been all my world."<sup>205</sup> The longevity and clarity of these

---

<sup>203</sup> Caja Munch, letter to her parents, 22 January, 1856, in *The Strange American Way: Letters of Caja Munch from Wiotia, Wisconsin, 1855 – 1859*, trans. H. Munch & P. Munch (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970), 34.

<sup>204</sup> William Henry Messerschmidt, "Autobiographical Notes" (unpubl., 1926), 2-3.

<sup>205</sup> Frank Vlcek, *The Story of My Life* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2004 [1928]), 295.

childhood memories suggest that for many immigrants, the landscape was far more than simply a staging ground for economic and social activities. Indeed, as lasting memories the landscapes of youth continued to shape how immigrants perceived, thought, and felt about the new environments they encountered, and comparing and interpreting old and new landscapes became part of the process of creating new identities on a different continent.

Leaving Denmark in the summer of 1870, a melancholy Caroline Junker filled her diary with melodramatic prose: “Farewell, farewell, all you dear trees I have planted. Farewell, farewell, my old home. Adieu adieu.”<sup>206</sup> A homesick Berta Bjøravåg wrote from Malta, Illinois, that her thoughts dwelled “among the hills and rocky slopes far, far away across the prairies and the great ocean.”<sup>207</sup> She longed to see her family in Norway, but the contrast between old and new home was conveniently drawn by juxtaposing two very different landscapes. To rural people, the image of “home” was always situated in a natural environment.

The journey from Europe to the American Midwest allowed ample opportunities for comparing, contrasting, and evaluating landscapes. Many emigrants from continental Europe had to spend some time in England before the transatlantic journey, and their fascinating responses to the very different landscapes they encountered there could by themselves fill a book. For most of the nineteenth century, England was far more industrial and urban than the rest of Europe, apparently to such a degree that it was easily perceived even by those simply passing through. Some thought large, ugly, polluted cities

---

<sup>206</sup> Caroline Junker diary, 2 June, 1870. Danish Immigrant Archives.

<sup>207</sup> Berta Bjøravåg, letter to her sister, 25 September, 1886, in Zempel, *In Their Own Words*, 31.

hideous and grotesque; others admired the impression of symmetry, artifice, and order manifest even in rural settings.

Some emigrants found opportunities to enjoy the view aboard ship. The Dane A. C. L. Grove-Rasmussen witnessed “a grand and moving sight” as his ship sailed past the coast of Scotland: mountains! Wild, irregular cliff islands rose steeply out of the sea, a breathtaking experience for a “child of the plains,” one “whose fatherland’s mountains are mere hills.”<sup>208</sup> Such opportunities to meet the new and unknown multiplied as immigrants arrived on American soil. A Swedish immigrant remembered his arrival in New York harbor with joy: “We left barren rocks and here we found tree-covered shores, and to me it looked pretty and inviting.”<sup>209</sup> Traveling inland, teenaged Caroline Junker rejoiced in the beautiful houses, fields, and fruit trees along the railroad track in New York, recoiled at the sight of mountains, cliffs, and great forests in Pennsylvania, and felt at ease again in the flat landscapes with vast, cultivated fields in Illinois.<sup>210</sup> Niels Sørensen Rungborg also favored the flat country in Ohio and Indiana over the mountains he saw in Pennsylvania.<sup>211</sup> Unlike Grove-Rasmussen, most Danes may have been happier without the unfamiliar presence of mountains.

As immigrants approached their new homes in the new world, their interest in the landscape often grew. A letter from Johan Gasmann described his steamboat journey from Buffalo, New York to Pine Lake, Wisconsin in considerable detail. Near Detroit he saw great agricultural potential, but it was a “monotonous” landscape unsuited for “the

---

<sup>208</sup> A. C. L. Grove-Rasmussen, *Rejseberetning* (Odense: Udvalget for evangelisk forkyndelse blandt landsmænd i Amerika, 1871), 7.

<sup>209</sup> Charles Hoflund, *Getting Ahead: A Swedish Immigrant's Reminiscences, 1834 – 1887*, ed. H. Arnold Barton (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989), 30.

<sup>210</sup> Caroline Junker diary, July 6, 1870.

<sup>211</sup> Niels Sørensen Rungborg, *Autobiography* (unpubl., n.d.), 165.

painter's brush."<sup>212</sup> The forests near Mackinac had all the tree species familiar from Norway, but the north shore of Michigan was not like Norway at all. It was "a poor and ugly landscape," with high sand hills, "bare," "desolate," with "a few scrubby pines."<sup>213</sup> Fortunately for Gasmann, the Pine Lake area where he was to settle was far more attractive. The combination of lakes, hills, prairie, valleys, thick woods, and clearings made a favorable impression, and "even though this landscape does not have the elevated character in respect to vistas that we find in parts of Norway and the Alpine countries, it is nevertheless exceedingly beautiful, bright, and charming."<sup>214</sup>

This last quote exemplifies how past experience as well as cultural preconceptions informed perceptions of landscapes and natural beauty. Whereas Norwegians often looked for mountains and dramatic prospects, Dutch immigrants showed a strong interest in rivers, canals, and the risk of flooding. Traveling on the Mississippi, Hendrick van Eyck noted in his diary that "the phenomenon of a mighty stream which frequently overflows its banks cause me to recall my beloved fatherland which often and for the same reason has had to suffer from so many disasters."<sup>215</sup> Later on, he was "agreeably surprised to see a beautiful prairie stretching along the higher ground by the river. The higher ground to me appeared to be a dike."<sup>216</sup> A Swiss traveler on the same river by contrast likened the bluffs to "old stone walls, fortifications, and knights' castles."<sup>217</sup>

---

<sup>212</sup> Johan Gasmann, letter to friends in Norway, 1844, in Blegen, *Land of Their Choice*, 163.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 167-168, quote on p. 168.

<sup>215</sup> Hendrick van Eyck's diary, 31 May, 1848, in *Dutch Immigrant Memoirs and Related Writings*, ed. Henry Lucas, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1997), 472.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 473.

<sup>217</sup> Joseph Suppiger diary, 28 August, 1831, in Abbott, *Journey to New Switzerland*, 127.

Although landscape perception is individualistic enough to make generalization hazardous, it does appear that immigrants from certain countries were more attached to the landscapes they came from, saw those landscapes as more crucial components of their own personal and national identities, took a greater interest in comparing new and old environments, and saw coming to terms with American landscapes as a more central aspect of negotiating new identities. Swiss and Norwegian immigrants, in particular, tended to see nature in “nationalized” terms, which greatly influenced the way they related to the natural environments they encountered in the rural Midwest.

The settlers who founded New Switzerland in the 1830s furnish a good example of this tendency. Joseph Suppiger, who saw knights’ castles in the Mississippi bluffs, took great interest in the natural environment as he traveled through the United States. Upon arriving in early St. Louis, he delighted in its “beautiful and healthy location.” The city “exceeded Luzerne in every respect.” Seeing its elevated position on a “magnificent” slope above a “great, beautiful” plain, his heart spoke to him: “Here I must remain. Here it is good to live; let us build here.”<sup>218</sup>

Soon afterwards the Suppigers and Koepflis bought land on the nearby Illinois prairie, but close to gently sloping hills that allowed them to seek out prospect views. One Sunday, following the Sabbath observance, they set out to climb the tallest hill they could find, and they were “rewarded with a magnificent view.”<sup>219</sup> They promptly named this elevation Rigi, after the famous mountain in Switzerland. Another hill was named

---

<sup>218</sup> Joseph Suppiger diary, 28 August, 1831, in Abbott, *Journey to New Switzerland*, 128.

<sup>219</sup> Salomon Koepfli, letter to Kaspar Marius Koepfli, 11 December, 1831, in Abbott *Journey to New Switzerland*, 142.

after the Sonnenberg, and the range of hills north and south of the new Rigi was dubbed the Jura.<sup>220</sup>

Obviously the incessant place-naming played an important role in the Swiss settlers' place-making process. As Paul Shepard observed, "landscapes without place names are disorienting."<sup>221</sup> To the human mind, a place without a name is scarcely a place, because it lacks identity and purpose. There were, of course, many such undifferentiated places on the American frontier. In the words of the poet Joseph Brodsky,

when a European encounters a tree, it's a tree made familiar by history [...]  
Whereas when an American walks out of his house and encounters a tree it  
is a meeting of equals. Man and tree face each other... free of references: neither  
has a past, and as to whose future is greatest, it is a toss-up.<sup>222</sup>

In America, unlike in Europe, rural dwellers looking at the landscape looked into the future rather than backward to the past. As Thomas Cole put it in his 1836 *Essay on American Scenery*, "where the wolf roams, the plow shall glisten."<sup>223</sup> But to these Swiss immigrants, the strong association between landscape and identity required a search for continuity and resemblance, no matter how preposterous their naming practices may seem to the retrospective observer. The aesthetics of promise inherent in the vision of transforming an American wilderness was given added meaning by connecting this new

---

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Shepard, *Man in the Landscape*, 43.

<sup>222</sup> Quoted in Mauch, "Introduction: Nature and Nation in Transatlantic Perspective," in idem, *Nature in German History*, 1.

<sup>223</sup> Quoted in Daniels, *Fields of Vision*, 157.

landscape to a country and an identity that they had not entirely left behind. The term “New Switzerland” was thus understood in an almost literal sense.

For the many Norwegian immigrants who settled on the prairies and plains in Minnesota and the Dakotas, opportunities to find anything resembling familiar landscapes were more limited. “How could people from beautiful, enchanting mountains endure life on this flat moor without even a decent hill to look at?” asked the amateur novelist Iver Bernhard.<sup>224</sup> Andreas Hjørpeland freely admitted that he had not found “such natural beauty as in Norway” in Minnesota.<sup>225</sup> “The prairie landscape is not in the least poetic,” wrote Gunnar Høst.<sup>226</sup> Nevertheless, both Hjørpeland and Høst found some pleasing elements in their Minnesota landscapes. In the end, old conceptions of natural beauty could be overcome. Surprised by a lovely sunset, Høst admitted that “I would never have believed that I would find beauty in a landscape without water, mountains, or forests nearby.”<sup>227</sup>

Dorothy Burton Skårdal found that in Scandinavian American literature, the characters’ attitudes to American landscapes reflected their attitudes to the American experience in general. Thus, in a Danish-American story, a young wife longed for the sparkling streams and soaring larks of her old homeland, but as she grew more comfortable with her new life she soon adapted to the new environment and learned to appreciate its wildflowers.<sup>228</sup> The private writings of immigrant settlers in the rural

---

<sup>224</sup> Quoted in Dorothy Burton Skårdal, *The Divided Heart: Scandinavian Immigrant Experience through Literary Sources* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1974), 262.

<sup>225</sup> Andreas Hjørpeland, letter to Ivar Kleiven, 24 June, 1871, in Zempel, *In Their Own Words*, 4.

<sup>226</sup> Gunnar Høst, letter to Agnes Hansen, 18 July, 1883, in Zempel, *In Their Own Words*, 56.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Skårdal, *The Divided Heart*, 262-263.



Midwest suggest that this process of adaptation and learning to value new forms of natural beauty was not restricted to fictional accounts.

Interpreting how ordinary immigrants perceived and evaluated the aesthetics of the landscapes they encountered is somewhat like navigating unknown waters. Most historians have concentrated on the articulation of aesthetic principles and “natural identities” by artists, poets, scholars, activists, and statesmen. On the other hand, the historian is faced with the theories formulated and the empirical work conducted by psychologists. They have argued that human beings for evolutionary reasons usually prefer landscapes with water, mountains, vegetation, and relatively high degrees of complexity and focality.<sup>229</sup>

In general, the evidence I have examined fits fairly well with the psychological interpretation and its suggestion that most people share a disposition to react to the same landscapes in similar ways. Yet a significant proportion of the sources also show the impact of culturally informed notions such as the Romantic conceptions of nature, and quite a few contrast American and European landscapes in ways that specifically invoke the meaning of natural features as characteristic not simply of microenvironments, but as distinctive to a nation. In addition, many seem to have been strongly influenced by their previous experiences, or put differently, the ways in which their life histories had been

---

<sup>229</sup> “Complexity” refers to the heterogeneity and diversity of a landscape, focality to the presence of one or more outstanding features that centers attention and organizes perception. See Ulrich, “Aesthetic and Affective Response to Natural Environment,” 105; Wohlwill, “The Concept of Nature,” 15. In other words, parts of the Great Plain without water, elevations, trees, complexity, or focality could be designated as almost anti-human landscapes. Thus it is not surprising that it is in Plains literature that the natural environment goes from being simply a setting to being an “articulate landscape,” an antagonist, as it were. The best known examples are found in the works of Willa Cather and Ole Rølvaåg. See Robert Thacker, *The Great Prairie Fact and Literary Imagination* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989).

entangled with different landscapes. Although some exulted in new and exciting places, most seem to have sought the familiar in the unknown.

In the 1820s, Sir Walter Scott and other intellectuals were working to establish an association between the sublime wilderness they portrayed as characteristic of the Highlands and the formation of Scottish national identity. But as one writer remarked, the common people of the Highlands saw things quite differently:

If a Highlander would show you a fine prospect, he does not lead you to the torrent and the romantic rocky glen, to the storm-beaten precipice or the cloud-capt mountain. It is to the strath covered with hamlets and cultivation, or to the extended tract of fertile lowlands, where the luxuriance of vegetation and wood depends on the exertion of human labour.<sup>230</sup>

In the context of Midwestern immigration, too, a gap in perception opened up between the educated and “sensitive” souls and those who quietly transformed the land for their own purposes. To most people who immigrated to the United States, the landscape was primarily the setting for productive activities, not an arena for contemplation and aesthetic judgment. On the other hand, poetically inclined immigrants who had absorbed the “naturalization of the nation” that took place in the nineteenth century seem to have struggled more with the alienation caused by an unfamiliar environment. People like Theodore Bost saw a connection between landscape and

---

<sup>230</sup> Quoted in Withers, “Contested Visions,” 274.

identity which was necessarily broken in the process of migration. As this demonstrates, the social and cultural backgrounds of the immigrants could be at least as important to their interpretation of new landscapes as the objective differences between natural environments in Europe and America were. The peasants, who supposedly represented the true folk spirit, apparently cared less about these things than their more bourgeois countrymen. When farmers and farm women saw beauty in nature, it was usually at least in part as a result of their own labors. Their aesthetics, if one can call it that, expressed a desire for the pastoral rather than the sublime or even the picturesque. As the psychologist Terence Lee found in a study of urban dwellers, most people are unable to mentally separate a place from the social activities and relationships within it. Lee consequently coined the term “neighborhoods in the mind.”<sup>231</sup> Similarly, European immigrants in the rural Midwest formed landscapes in the mind, landscapes almost always associated with work, money-making, and family.

The anthropologist E. E. Evans-Pritchard observed a fascinating phenomenon among the Nuer people. Those who left the tribe to settle elsewhere took along some of the soil of their ancestral lands, and drank a mixture of native soil and water every day. As time passed, an increasing amount of earth from the new location was added to the solution, thus allowing a gradual breaking of old ties and a forging of new ones.<sup>232</sup> European migrants lacked such clearly defined ritual expressions. They had to find meanings in new landscapes themselves, and create places out of culturally empty space. Part of negotiating and performing a new identity was to come to terms with the

---

<sup>231</sup> Lee, *Psychology and the Environment*, 35.

<sup>232</sup> See Tuan, “Geopieté,” 32.

landscape and possibly establish some symbolic connection with past times and places. Yet, experiencing the Rigi from an Illinois hilltop requires a certain amount of self-deceit. To those who prized and identified with the landscapes they left behind, something must have been irretrievably lost.

### 3: STATUS, CLASS, AND ETHNICITY

This chapter examines two kinds of processes of social comparison and identity construction in immigrant lives. The first half of the chapter focuses on life among strangers (ethnicity), while the second half deals with matters of work, class, and status. Although I have attempted to separate these two aspects of developing immigrant identities for analytical purposes, the evidence will show that the two to a great extent were intertwined with each other. In both cases, identities had to be adapted to new, American contexts.

In recent decades, historians and other scholars have abandoned the idea that ethnic groups are culture groups defined by shared ancestry, culture, and traditions. They have argued that an ethnic community does not represent a cultural totality, but rather functions as a social organization mobilized in interaction with other groups. Thus distinctions between two groups are not made on the basis of objective differences in “total culture,” but rather by emphasizing a set of differences deemed significant by those involved. The anthropologist Fredrik Barth referred to these as “cultural differentiae” or “boundary markers.” This view has been called “situationalist” or “circumstantialist;” to Barth, encounters were “the stuff of society.”<sup>233</sup> Some scholars have gone so far as to say

---

<sup>233</sup> Fredrik Barth, “Introduction,” in idem, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1969); idem, *Process and Form in Social Life*, 123; see also Judith Nagata, “In Defense of Ethnic Boundaries: The Changing Myths and Charters of Malay Identity,” in *Ethnic Change*, ed. Charles F. Keyes (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981); C. Govers & H. Vermeulen, “From Political Mobilization to the Politics of Consciousness,” in *The Politics of Ethnic Consciousness*, ed. Govers & Vermeulen (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997); F. Morin & B. Saladin d’Anglure, “Ethnicity as a Political Tool for Indigenous Peoples,” in Govers & Vermeulen, *The Politics of Ethnic Consciousness*, 159-161; Eugene E. Roosens, *Creating Ethnicity: The Process of Ethnogenesis* (Newbury Park, Cal.: Sage, 1989), 12.

that symbols of ethnic identity are “purely arbitrary and unique to each case.”<sup>234</sup> Cultural forms serve to express ethnic identities rather than to define them. According to this perspective, ethnic identity itself is the decisive cultural feature of an ethnic group.<sup>235</sup>

Since this interpretation of ethnicity struck root in the 1970s, scholars studying the historical origins of nationalism have gone even further in the direction of anti-essentialism. These historians, sociologists, and anthropologists have emphasized that social identities are constructed and that the maintenance of ethnic and national feeling requires conscious acts of “imagination” and “invention.”<sup>236</sup> In the modern era, identities have been fostered or fabricated by portraying large, abstract communities as natural, intimate ones; in Toenniesian terms, modern men and women have learned (through mass media, formal education, and fabricated myths, rituals, and historical memories) to conceive what is really a *Gesellschaft* as a *Gemeinschaft*.<sup>237</sup> These studies have had a great deal of influence on most scholars engaged in the study of ethnicity and ethnic identity in the last couple of decades.

It is, however, possible to go one step further and interrogate the notion of “ethnic identity” as such. The concept suggests that ethnicity as one aspect of the human self can

---

<sup>234</sup> Orlando Patterson, “Context and Choice in Ethnic Allegiance: A Theoretical Framework and Caribbean Case Study,” in *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, ed. N. Glazer & D. P. Moynihan (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), 306.

<sup>235</sup> Keyes, “The Dialectics of Ethnic Change,” in idem, *Ethnic Change*; idem, “Introduction,” in *Ethnic Adaption and Identity: The Karen of the Thai Frontier with Burma*, ed. Keyes (Philadelphia: Institute of the Study of Human Issues, 1979).

<sup>236</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Second ed. (New York: Verso, 1991); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983); Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); idem & T. Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983). For an influential counterargument, see A. D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (New York: Blackwell, 1986).

<sup>237</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*; Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* (Newbury Park, Cal.: Sage, 1991).

be separated from other significant aspects of identity. By contrast, a psychocultural approach recognizes that people play a variety of roles, which we nonetheless seek to integrate into a coherent whole by somehow envisioning an inner consistency between the various roles and group affiliations. This process enables us to establish multilayered, complex, idiosyncratic selves.<sup>238</sup>

For the immigrant, self-definition became at once more important and more complicated. As seen elsewhere in this study, being an immigrant meant frequent opportunities and a strongly felt need to express one's identity relative to new and unknown contexts and phenomena. Immigrants needed to integrate new contexts and new roles in a self-concept that also retained a sense of continuity with the past and its people, places, and memories. The strategies they used were too diverse to allow easy generalization, but a few examples will show some of the range of responses to this challenge of self-definition.

After living in the United States for many years, L. C. Laursen still loved Denmark as one would a parental home.<sup>239</sup> But in his mind, he no longer belonged to Denmark. Children of the tribe, offshoots of the family tree, Danish Americans formed "a new tribe" of their own. "I have been embraced by the land and the people here, and I, in turn, embrace them!" he proclaimed.<sup>240</sup> However, Laursen admitted that it was a difficult process. Many Danish Americans, even among the second generation, felt American, yet were "halfway homeless in their own beautiful native land."<sup>241</sup> Contrary to many

---

<sup>238</sup> George A. De Vos, "Self in Society: A Multilevel, Psychocultural Analysis," in De Vos & M. Suarez-Orozco, *Status Inequality: The Self in Culture* (Newbury Park, Cal.: Sage, 1990). 32-33.

<sup>239</sup> L. C. Laursen, "Stammens børn," (s. n., 1931), 136. Laursen papers, Danish Immigrant Archives.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 136-137.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 137.

historians who have emphasized the positive, mutually reaffirming aspects of having a double or complementary identity, Laursen also pointed to the negatives. Neither fully Danish nor fully American, immigrants and their children might find it hard to arrive at a fully satisfactory understanding of who they were. On the other hand, Laursen also stressed the “richness and depth of perspective” inherent in being a bilingual people. To him, there was something more “universally human” about being Danish American than being simply Danish or American.<sup>242</sup> As immigrant writings often confirm, being intimately familiar with life in two different countries allowed some people to view both societies from a unique point of view. At the same time, looking in from the outside required a distance from both prior and present location that could be alienating and uncomfortable.

Laursen’s analysis of the question of identity stands out from most immigrants’ writings on the topic. He was able to articulate a sophisticated framework for understanding his own identity primarily based on his own and his group’s experience, without drawing sharp essentialist contrasts between Danish Americans and other people in the United States. At the other end of the spectrum we find immigrants who were so overwhelmed by the prejudice they encountered in America that their definition of identity could only be formed in response to the negative perceptions others had of them. In general, the immigrants discussed in this dissertation had the tremendous privilege of being defined as white people, which meant that they, to simplify, were more often perpetrators and beneficiaries of racism and discrimination than its victims. There were, however, exceptions. Lorenz Degenhard reported from antebellum Missouri that the old-

---

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 137-139.



stock Americans there only valued themselves and their own country, and had little knowledge or respect for other peoples and lands. Generally of a “proud, stupid, and conceited” nature, the Americans considered other people inferior. This prejudice affected both the Germans and the Irish in the area. The lower classes of German immigrants were almost as low as one could get on the social ladder: the natives referred to them simply as “black Dutchmen.” Becoming an “American” was not an option for Degenhard like it was for Laursen. To be American meant to be obsessed with making money and getting rich. Degenhard admitted that there were many willing to go down that path, but also felt that those who, like him, saw a different purpose in life, would never be completely comfortable in the United States.<sup>243</sup>

Theodor van Dreveldt, too, felt that Americans had a low opinion of foreigners, and especially of Germans. “Germans are hated here, or better stated, despised; they are called ‘Dutchmen’ although educated people know the difference,” he wrote to a friend back in Germany.<sup>244</sup> Although he acknowledged that he had not himself suffered any injustice because of American nativism and xenophobia, these characteristics of American social life helped induce his decision to go back home.

Between Laursen at the one extreme and Degenhard and van Dreveldt at the other lies a wide spectrum of immigrant notions of ethnicity and national identity in America. Some people saw America as a stage where new identities could be created and performed, others felt that they had identities thrust upon them by the negative stereotyping done by others. Most found their identities somewhere in between, and

---

<sup>243</sup> Lorenz Degenhard, letter to his father and siblings, 29 October, 1835, in “*Amerika ist ein freies land....*” *Auswanderer schreiben nach Deutschland*, ed. Wolfgang Helbich (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1985), 162-163.

<sup>244</sup> Theodor van Dreveldt, letter to Franz von Weise, March, 1848, in Kronenberg, *Lives and Letters*, 79.

expressed their notions of ethnicity in a mostly haphazard way as situations that warranted ethnic interpretation arose. What most of these immigrants had in common was the need to define some kind of understanding of their own identities as they related to both the people at home and the people they encountered in the United States.

In the rural Midwest, coming to terms with the old-stock American or Yankee population usually played some role in the process. These strangers were not necessarily the majority in the community, the county, or the state, but they were by default recognized as the “norm” for what it meant to be American. Very rarely did that mean that immigrants consciously sought to emulate the Yankees, or admit to it even if they did. Instead, the Yankee population tended to serve as a reference point used to assess American values.

Summarizing what Europeans immigrants in the rural Midwest thought about the Yankees is a difficult if not impossible task. Many were critical of their behavior and values, and used Yankee flaws to highlight their own righteousness. Others saw admirable traits and a respectable way of life. The generalizations that follow below should be understood merely as efforts to find some patterns in these kinds of statements.

Some immigrant writers criticized the religious life of old-stock Americans. The Norwegian preacher Olaus Fredrik Duus had a very low opinion of religion on the Wisconsin frontier:

Concerning faith, knowledge, or baptism, the American thinks, *Never mind that*. He either knows no better, or does not wish to know better.

Indeed, there is such gross wickedness and absolute ungodliness that the devil has good reason to rejoice wholeheartedly, as he undoubtedly does.<sup>245</sup>

However, other writers, perhaps more typical, chided the native-born for taking religion a little too seriously. Another Norwegian noted that Americans observed the Sabbath with “almost pharisaical severity,” and that some of them were in the habit of praying and reading the Bible every day. This struck the anonymous writer as simply too good to be true, and he suggested the possibility that there might be some “white sepulchers” among all these holy people.<sup>246</sup>

Immigrants tended to see the strict observance of the Sabbath as typically American and symptomatic of overly puritanical tendencies. Christian Hanssen walked many miles one Sunday in 1887 to seek employment for the winter on a Yankee woman’s farm. However, she refused to discuss such matters on the Sabbath, considering it “unseemly if not outright sinful.”<sup>247</sup> In the end, she allowed him to spend the night and come to an agreement the next day. The traveling pastor A. C. L. Grove-Rasmussen also found the Americans to be fanatical about the day of rest, and found many Danes who complained about the lack of amusement on Sundays.<sup>248</sup> In most of Europe, Sunday was a day of rest, but also a day of festivities and excitement.

---

<sup>245</sup> Olaus Fr. Duus, letter to his father, June 26, 1858, in Blegen, *Frontier Parsonage*, 96.

<sup>246</sup> Letter from a Norwegian immigrant in Beloit, Wisconsin, to a friend in Norway, 29 November, 1851, in Blegen, *Land of Their Choice*: 272-273.

<sup>247</sup> Hansen, *Da jeg kom til Minnesota*, 13.

<sup>248</sup> Grove-Rasmussen, *Rejseberetning*, 26.

American devotion to keeping the Sabbath contrasted with Yankee neglect of other holy days. European immigrants often found it very difficult to accept that their neighbors or employers in puritanical fashion had very modest, if any, celebrations of Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. Jørgen Jørgensen remembered one occasion when other Danes came to visit them on the farm in Wisconsin, and greeted them with a jolly “Happy Pentecost!” His wife sat down and began to cry – she had not realized what day it was. Soon afterward the Jørgensen family decided to move away from their American neighbors (“not among the more intelligent or enlightened”) and settle in a Danish community in Montana.<sup>249</sup>

Berta Kingestad described an equally harrowing holiday experience in a letter to her family in Norway:

Alas, you would not believe what a sad and cheerless Christmas holiday this has been. Just think, not even to be among Norwegian people, and these English and Americans don’t care about Christmas. Around here there were many who went out and plowed on Christmas Day. Here where I work at least we kept the holiday. I am ashamed to admit it, yet it is true, that I went around in an old, worn, and dirty dress, and this is surely the first time in the 26 Christmases that I have lived that I have not washed myself and changed clothes. You must not be angry with me when you read this, I could not help it, and it is so difficult to be among strangers.<sup>250</sup>

---

<sup>249</sup> Jørgen Jørgensen, *Lifserindring* (unpubl., n. d.), 20-21.

<sup>250</sup> Berta Kingestad, letter to her family in Norway, 7 January, 1890, in Zempel, *In Their Own Words*, 44.

It could indeed be difficult to live among strangers, especially when their behavior made it a real challenge to perceive a minimum of continuity in one's own life. Spending Christmas in this fashion was obviously both shameful and painful, but Kingstad "could not help it." Especially for a servant, living among strangers made reproducing the rituals and joys of home near impossible. It also raised questions about the depth of the Yankees' religious commitment. As Swiss immigrant Theodore Bost put it, "why should we not celebrate the anniversary of the resurrection of Jesus when we make so much noise commemorating the Declaration of Independence on the Fourth of July?"<sup>251</sup>

To many European immigrants, the Yankees were particularly difficult to live with because of their tendency toward extremism. On Sundays and other holidays, as well as in the everyday, immigrants' drinking habits encountered the new attitudes toward alcohol prevalent among large segments of the native-born American population. The fact that Americans tended to rely on water to quench their thirst during the workday shocked and appalled many newcomers. Even European clergymen who supported the idea of temperance in principle sometimes thought that its severe application in the United States went a little too far in denying people such simple pleasures as a glass of wine or a mug of beer.

The importance of the temperance question increased over time, and eventually Yankee prohibitionists found allies in Scandinavian and British Protestants. To some extent, it became a Protestant vs. Catholic issue, and as such fitted in neatly with the general division of Midwesterners, with Protestants in the Republican Party and Catholics in the Democratic Party. When Theodore Bost complained about living "under the

---

<sup>251</sup> Theodore Bost, letter to Etienne Bost, in Bowen, *Frontier Family*, 90-91.

domination of lawless Germans,” he was referring to German Catholics who ran illegal saloons and used the Catholic majority in the county to shield themselves from prosecution.<sup>252</sup> Bost was happy to serve as foreman on the grand jury which brought indictments against many of these wrongdoers, and declared it a Protestant triumph:

The vote, though there were no religious issues, was exactly split between the Protestants and Catholics, with one Swiss, three Englishmen, two Americans, six Swedes, and two German Protestants against eight German Catholics. It has been a great victory for us.<sup>253</sup>

Sabbatarianism, the neglect of great holidays, and the rejection of alcohol made for a rather joyless portrayal of the Yankee in some immigrant writings. Americans were less interested in enjoying life and more interested in working and making money, it seemed to many observers. Practical and financial consideration also won out over concerns about aesthetics. Although he admired the Americans for their liberal values, common sense, and practical approach to things, Kaspar Koepfli found certain shortcomings in culture among the native-born: “They have no aesthetic appreciation, as is shown by their monotonous, crude music and singing and by their preference for everything loud, bright, and unusual.”<sup>254</sup> A disapproving Dutchman was even more critical of Yankee culture:

---

<sup>252</sup> Theodore Bost, letter to Jenny Bost, 13 April, 1873, in Bowen, *Frontier Family*, 315-316.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, 318.

<sup>254</sup> Koepfli, “Advantages and Disadvantages,” 191.

It seems to me Americans have little awareness of refined culture or pleasures. Even their houses stand in the midst of stone, clay, or wild growth, although there is plenty of room for a garden. All they think of is work, and that is why most men of forty look as if they were fifty or sixty.<sup>255</sup>

One of the more interesting findings in the immigrant letters and other writings is the attitude many immigrants had toward work. Whereas historians have tended to portray the native-born as especially fond of labor-saving technology, while seeing immigrants as hardy pioneers with a special affinity for physical labor, the evidence I have examined suggests something completely different. A large proportion of immigrants associated hard physical labor with suffering and obligation, part of the oppression they were trying to escape when they left Europe. To have more leisure or at least be better rewarded for hard work was one of the great incentives for immigrating to the United States.<sup>256</sup> Immigrants often thought that the Yankees worked too hard and were too concerned with money, and they happily enjoyed the comfort of new technology when it became available:

Yes, I am doing just as well here as in Sweden, and why shouldn't I?

There is not such hard work here as in Sweden, since one can sit and

---

<sup>255</sup> Andreas N. Wormser, letter to J. A. Wormser, 17 November, 1848, in *Iowa Letters: Dutch Immigrants on the American Frontier*, comp. J. Stellingwerff, ed. R. Swierenga, trans. W. Lagerwey (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 246.

<sup>256</sup> For example, many immigrants were overjoyed when they found out that they could grow plentiful crops without manuring or fallowing, and cared little or not at all about whether such practices were ecologically sustainable. It should perhaps not be a great surprise that immigrants actually were happy that they no longer had to haul animal waste up hills and through forests, but few historians have been willing to recognize this fact.

ride behind horses all day until one's behind hurts. One only walks  
behind the harrow, otherwise all machinery is made to ride on.<sup>257</sup>

Even though Yankees could be seen as unusually hardworking people, the deceitful types of men who made money without working were seen as characteristically Yankee as well. Some immigrants saw land speculators, moneylenders, lawyers, peddlers, quacks, confidence men, and other parasites as products of the materialism of American culture. Some of the stereotypes describing Jews in Europe were more or less transferred to Yankees in America. As with some other common notions about the native-born, this set of ideas exhibited the moral ambivalence of immigrants toward capitalism. It might be cynical to conclude that European immigrants projected their own moneymaking desires onto immoral Yankees to maintain their sense of moral worth in a new context. Nonetheless, I think this interpretation comes closer to the truth than simply assuming that immigrants were principled anticapitalists. Once they had accumulated some wealth, they were certainly not shy about bragging about it in their letters home.

Immigrants also raised questions about the courage and competence of Americans as soldiers. During a conflict between the government and indigenous people in Minnesota in 1857, Theodor C. Levig wrote a letter to the Norwegian-language paper *Emigranten* describing Yankee soldiers as cowards and braggarts, a bunch of lazy, drunken, incompetent fools of little use in the effort to “pacify” the Indians. The

---

<sup>257</sup> Philip Gustafson, letter to his father, 3 March, 1903, in *Tre Bröder – Ett Amerika*, ed. Jessica Warnander (Mjölby: Atremi, 2005), 126.



Norwegian farmers were, by contrast, “cold-blooded” and brave.<sup>258</sup> Theodore Bost was even more enraged with Yankee cowardice after hearing reports from the Civil War battlefields about the native-born retreating and leaving the Irish and Germans to fight the Southern rebels. The sharp contrast with the martial traditions of his native Switzerland was only too obvious:

If they’d form a regiment of Swiss, I’d be quite happy to join up with them, because the Swiss know how to fight and I don’t like the idea of fighting alongside these cowardly and selfish Americans [...] Oh, Switzerland, Switzerland! You’re a small country but how much more true feeling and real patriotism you have than there is in this country of blowhards and hypocrites!<sup>259</sup>

Historians of the European immigration have tended to focus a great deal on native-born prejudice against immigrants. Ever since the publication of John Higham’s *Strangers in the Land* half a century ago, this has been a key feature of research in immigration history.<sup>260</sup> However, as the previous paragraphs have shown, the immigrants had prejudices of their own and were not inclined to accept the native-born population as their superiors. Heinrich Jöckel and his wife lived comfortably with a house, a garden, and plenty of work in Chandlerville, Illinois, but after three months of dealing with “loud

---

<sup>258</sup> Theodor C. Levig, letter to *Emigranten*, 8 June, 1857, in *Norse Immigrant Letters: Glimpses of Norse Immigrant Life in the Northwest in the Fifties* (Minneapolis: Lutheran Free Church Publishing, 1925), 23-26.

<sup>259</sup> Theodore Bost, letter to his parents, 9 September, 1861, in Bowen, *Frontier Family*, 192.

<sup>260</sup> John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860 – 1925* (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1955).

Americans” they had had enough and moved to a town with a more substantial German population.<sup>261</sup> Living among one’s own was also a way to avoid living among strangers. Most of the time, immigrants in the rural Midwest were seemingly more concerned with their own prejudices against others than they were about the nativism of old-stock Americans.

At the same time, native-born whites and European immigrants were united by the privileges derived from their common racial identity.<sup>262</sup> Since there were few non-whites in most of the rural Midwest, this was not always obvious, but the statements immigrants made about American Indians and African Americans leave little doubt about the racial solidarity between all whites and the shared conception of the inferiority of other races. A letter from a Norwegian in antebellum Missouri provides a rather stark example of this:

All kinds of people from all nations of the world live together here like brothers and sisters; and in spite of the fact that there are no garrisons of soldiers, police, and the like, you never hear anything about theft, begging, or any noticeable ill will between neighbors. To me everybody is good, kind, and accommodating [...] Since Missouri is a slave state, there are a great many Negroes here. They are held in ignorance and have a

---

<sup>261</sup> Heinrich Jöckel, letter, 12 July, 1863, in Helbich, “*Amerika ist ein freies Land*”, 168-169.

<sup>262</sup> The process of becoming “white” has received a great deal of attention in the relatively new field of whiteness studies. Central historical works in that field include David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998).

superstitious kind of religion... If a theft is committed, people are sure that a colored person did it, much as a monkey would...<sup>263</sup>

*Much as a monkey would.* Unfortunately, this was often the level of discourse about people with different skin colors in immigrant writings. When immigrants wrote about their experiences with Indians, they often grouped them along with animals, as part of wild nature rather than humanity. In fact, the term “wild” was widely used in the different languages to describe the indigenous people of the country. However, actual encounters with such people some times overcame the most ridiculous preconceptions. Hilarius and Maria Rondorf reported that they had an Indian camp nearby, but there was no reason to be alarmed:

They are not cannibals, like they say [in Germany], no, they are happy children of the wilderness, and they would rather eat bread than human flesh, but they do not want to work.<sup>264</sup>

On the other hand, some who expected Indians to be “noble savages” were disappointed when they saw the circumstances in which removal and dependency had placed them. They were “dirty, thievish, and cunning” rather than noble, Johann Wilhelm Zassenhaus thought, and not too proud to beg or perform for a bottle of liquor.<sup>265</sup>

---

<sup>263</sup> Hans Barlien, letter to Jens Rynning, 23 April, 1839, in Blegen, *Land of Their Choice*, 53.

<sup>264</sup> Hilarius & Maria Rondorf, letter to a cousin, 20 January, 1856, in Helbich, *Amerika ist ein freies Land*, 148.

<sup>265</sup> Johann Wilhelm Zassenhaus, letter, n. d., in Helbich, *Amerika ist ein freies Land*, 147.

Whereas the quintessential Yankee could be portrayed as a solemn, joyless capitalist obsessed with work and making money, the Indian as portrayed by immigrant writers was often the opposite: a lazy, immoral being, obsessed with carnal pleasures, who would rather beg or steal than work. In a remarkable feat of the imagination, whites saw dependence, vice, and poverty as the cause of the Indians' marginalization rather than recognizing that removal, ecological destruction, and discrimination had created their miserable living conditions. People who refused to work in the Euro-American sense of the word, convert to Christianity, and embrace the Western way of life deserved their problems and even death and extermination. When the indigenous people took up arms against the white people and their government, immigrant writers seethed with hatred and genocidal rage. After the Sioux uprising in Minnesota in 1862, Gro Svendsen wrote that "it isn't enough merely to subdue them. I think that not a single one who took part in the revolt should be permitted to live... I fear that they will be let off too easily."<sup>266</sup>

In general, non-whites were met with hostility, suspicion, and fear. They were best avoided altogether. Elisabeth Wolf tried to explain to her sister that as of 1922, South Dakota was no longer the Wild West: "It is pretty, built-up country with good, cultivated people (no blacks and Indians)."<sup>267</sup> Denigrating blacks and Indians (and on rare occasions, Mexicans and Asians) affirmed white solidarity and justified white supremacy.

Yet, as in most things, individual behavior was not always consistent with prevailing ideologies, and some immigrants interacted with non-whites as equals and

---

<sup>266</sup> Gro Svendsen, letter to her parents, December, 1862, in Blegen, *Land of Their Choice*, 394.

<sup>267</sup> Elisabeth Wulf, letter to her sister, in Helbich, *Amerika ist ein freies Land*, 90.

thought nothing of it. Anna Larson had a “good place” in Michigan, even though her colleagues were Irish and black.<sup>268</sup> As a teenager, Hjalmar Kjems worked with two “mulattoes” in a brickyard, and he later noted that “we considered them our equals.”<sup>269</sup> Oscar Meyer remembered that his father often hunted with the Indians in Wisconsin. The Indians drove the deer to the desired location, and the sharp-shooting Meyer senior killed it. Then the Indians divided the deer, and allowed Meyer to choose his part.<sup>270</sup>

However, working with strangers was not always so harmonious. Swedish Filip Gustafson hired out to an Irishman for four months, but ended up staying only three weeks. The verbally abusive Irishman with “a real fox face” infuriated Gustafson. “And then I thought, why should I, a Swede, have to take this abuse from an Irishman?”<sup>271</sup> In the end, he had to sue “the damned Irishman” to receive his wages. In his next job, Gustafson only made \$ 20 a month, but he did not have to work as hard as on the Irishman’s farm. Better yet, he was working for a Swedish farmer. “Now I am rid of all Irishmen and Americans,” he enthusiastically wrote to his father.<sup>272</sup>

The resentment against the Irish was remarkably great among many of the immigrants, and especially among the Scandinavians. When Sven Hansson described the relationship between Irish and Scandinavians as similar to the one between dogs and cats, it was only a mild exaggeration. Even on the transatlantic voyage, Hansson explained that the Irish had to sleep and eat in separate quarters, and that they were rarely on deck

---

<sup>268</sup> Anna Larson, letter to family in Sweden, July 22, 1883, in Larson, *Mom’s Letters Home*, ed. & trans. Esther Larson (unpubl., 1971), 13.

<sup>269</sup> Kjems, *Mit liv*, 11.

<sup>270</sup> Transcript of interview with Oscar E. Meyer, *Ethnic History of Wisconsin Project*, 1.

<sup>271</sup> Filip Gustafson, letter to his father and siblings, 15 December, 1902, in Wernander, *Tre Bröder*, 120-122.

<sup>272</sup> Philip Gustafson, letter to his father, 3 March, 1903, in Wernander, *Tre Bröder*, 125. Around this time Gustafson apparently changed his name from Filip to the Americanized Philip.

without some kind of incident.<sup>273</sup> J. E. Liljeholm, too, complained about the many Irish on board and the almost daily brawls they initiated, often with bloody outcomes.

Liljeholm also claimed that an Irishman had stolen all his valuables. He happened to run into this Irishman several days later, beat him up, and left him unconscious in the street.<sup>274</sup>

Prejudice was not always directed at foreigners in the conventional meaning of the term. Some immigrants held on to their own ideas of self-worth by re-asserting their superiority over the lower classes from their own home country. Few things rankled the educated and privileged among immigrants more than seeing the peasants and servants from back home turn into independent farmers, businessmen, and craftsmen in the United States. The fact that such people were treated as equals in America was disturbing, and could only be the result of ridiculous misunderstandings:

In general, American farmers are much more refined than those from Gelderland and Overijssel. Whenever you hear someone talking about another person, they will always refer to “the gentleman” or “Mr.,” and they always address each other as Sir. There were times when my wife could not help laughing when she heard an American use the word “gentleman” in referring one of our farm folk. Our farmers have not become gentlemen; they are still peasants.<sup>275</sup>

---

<sup>273</sup> Sven Hansson, *Lefnadsteckning på vers och prosa* (Ronneby: Ronneby Hembygd-förening, 2003), 34.

<sup>274</sup> J. E. Liljeholm, *Anteckningar under en af mig företagen resa til Norra Amerika och vistandet derstädes under 4 år* (unpubl., n. d.). According to Liljeholm, the reason for this vigilantism was that a police officer had demanded a \$ 10 bribe up front to look into the case.

<sup>275</sup> Hendrik P. Scholte, letter to J. A. Wormser, 4 August, 1848, in Stellingwerff, *Iowa Letters*, 111-112.

The ethnic organizations centered on church, school, and fraternity often served the purposes of these ethnic elites. They were used to claim the equality of the group with other groups in the United States, while at the same time maintaining some of the hierarchy known from the home country within the group. That historians often take these organizations to be the essence of immigrant life in America is problematic. Many immigrants had no connection with such organizations, and even those who joined often fought vigorously to place them on an American footing of equality and freedom rather than reproducing the authority structures they had left behind.

The example given here comes from the Norwegian Lutheran congregation at Koshkonong Prairie, Wisconsin. Pastor Dietrichson had excommunicated a man, Halvor Funkelien. When Funkelien showed up for the church service on Whitsunday, 1845, Dietrichson ordered him to sit in a chair of disgrace at the door of the church. Funkelien refused, and was subsequently forced to leave. Yet, in America, it was the excommunicated man who got the last word. Funkelien sued Dietrichson in the local court, and the latter was fined \$ 50 for abuse of his authority.<sup>276</sup> In general, European clergymen had to make significant adjustments to American conditions, which is abundantly clear from their incessant complaints in letters, church records, and other writings.

Ethnic institutions did not allow simple reproduction of cultural patterns from the old country. Everything that happened in the United States was marked by the new social and cultural context. Even the language people spoke within the group was so heavily

---

<sup>276</sup> This incident was related by Nils Hansen Nærum in a letter to J. H. Nærum, 16 November, 1845, in Blegen, *Land of Their Choice*, 200-201.

influenced by local conditions and English vocabulary that newcomers usually found it either amusing or annoying; at any rate, it was clearly a new cultural form. People came together in these organizations because they felt or wanted to feel a sense of belonging, to express a distinctive identity, and most of all to be among people they thought were similar to themselves.

The joy of being among people of one's own kind rather than among strangers seemed so natural and obvious to immigrants that they rarely bothered to explain why they preferred it. Johannes Kerler wrote from Wisconsin that "our neighborhood, like Milwaukee, is mostly made up from Germans, and this is of great value to us."<sup>277</sup> His son Johannes Kerler, Jr. added that in Milwaukee one could find taverns, beer cellars, and German beer. He advised those who wanted to be among fellow Germans to come to Wisconsin.<sup>278</sup> From Dupage County, Illinois, Anna Larson wrote that she had enjoyed a Sunday trip to Chicago: "I had a good time, since I was with Swedish people."<sup>279</sup>

This sentiment was so common as to be typical. In the early 1930s, the sociologist Albert F. Schersten conducted a study among Swedish Americans in the cities of Moline and Rock Island, Illinois. Schersten asked his subjects what we would now consider an amazingly blunt question: Would you rather be with Swedish people?<sup>280</sup> Among those who read Swedish-language newspapers (a narrow majority of the sample), 74 percent preferred to be among Swedes. Among those who did not read Swedish newspapers, 48.5

---

<sup>277</sup> Johannes Kerler, letter to his cousin, November 1849, in Frank, *Pionierjahre*, 60.

<sup>278</sup> Johannes Kerler, Jr., letter to August Frank, 27 March, 1850, in Frank, *Pionierjahre*, 66.

<sup>279</sup> Anna Larson, letter to her family in Sweden, 6 January, 1885, in E. Larson, *Mom's Letters Home*, 17.

<sup>280</sup> Albert F. Schersten, *The Relation of the Swedish-American Newspaper to the Assimilation of Swedish Immigrants* (Rock Island, Ill.: Augustana Library Publications, 1935), 14. It should be noted here that scientific sampling was in its infancy at the time, and that Schersten clearly did not understand how to draw a representative sample. These numbers cannot be assumed to be entirely representative of the Swedish population in the two cities, but serve here as an illustration.



percent would rather spend time with Swedes, while 51.5 percent had no preference.<sup>281</sup> Overall, more than 60 percent seem to have expressed an explicit preference for socializing with other Swedes, and their reported patterns of socialization bore this out: a majority of both readers and non-readers said that they spent more time with Swedes than with other people.<sup>282</sup> It is worth mentioning that most of the Swedes in the sample had come to America when they were young and had lived in the country for several decades. They also lived in an urban context where Swedes were clearly in the minority.

I mention the Schersten study here to emphasize once again the value immigrants saw in being among their own kind, and the corresponding discomfort they often felt among strangers. Belonging to a certain group, often defined in terms of nationality, meant belonging to a social network of recognizable others. It was to a great extent a matter of interpersonal trust. Immigrating to America was time and time again described as a dangerous process with untrustworthy, scheming people around every corner. Non-whites were trusted least, as the depictions of Indians and blacks confirm, but most whites were different and unknown entities as well. Immigrants entered a vast country with a large, diverse population where they immediately had to relate to others in market transactions, employment, and civic life. Drawing on the social capital established by ethnic networks had great practical benefits to immigrants: jobs, store credit, help with building projects or starting a business, and charity in times of crisis; these things flowed most easily within the ethnic network.

---

<sup>281</sup> Ibid., Table XXI, 82.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

However, there were more intangible benefits as well. Throughout the writings of immigrants, there is a sense of joy and emotional fulfillment in being with one's own people that cannot be fully explained with reference to prevailing political, economic, and social interpretations of ethnicity and ethnic identity. There was a special kind of satisfaction in being among one's own that many immigrants took for granted. This important aspect of ethnic identity demands greater attention in future research.

Although living among strangers could be difficult and confusing, many thought such emotional costs balanced by the rewards American society had to offer. Franz Josef Löwen spent a lot of time thinking about his family back home, and agreed with the old saying: "be it ever so lovely a land, it never will be home."<sup>283</sup> Yet when he thought about the hard life of a poor laborer in the old country, he concluded that it was a good thing that he had left:

I thank all who scorned the poor son of a nailmaker, since only because of the miserable treatment I received in Germany could I decide to leave my homeland.<sup>284</sup>

One of the most astute foreign observers of nineteenth-century America was the Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville. Through comparing American democracy with English aristocracy and French statism he became one of the founders of modern social science. By democracy, Tocqueville meant the state of equality between men in social

---

<sup>283</sup> Franz Josef Löwen, letter to his siblings and their spouses, 25 January, 1880, in Kamphoefner et al., *News From the Land of Freedom*, 194.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

and economic terms as much as the political system. His observations suggested that equality in the United States was an “extraordinary phenomenon,” as men were as equal “as in any other country of the world or in any other country in the annals of history.”<sup>285</sup>

Tocqueville believed that this equality among men defined the circumstances of social life. Social equality enabled Americans to interact with each other in less formal and ritualized ways than Europeans were used to:

In America, where privileges of birth have never existed and where wealth grants no particular right to its owner, strangers readily congregate in the same places and find neither danger nor advantage in telling each other freely what they think. If they meet by chance, they neither seek each other out nor keep away from each other. Their manner is, therefore, natural, open, and unreserved; we see that there is practically nothing they expect or fear from each other and they make no more effort to reveal than to conceal their social position.<sup>286</sup>

This second half of the chapter considers the question of equality and the significance of class and status in the United States relative to the European contexts more familiar to immigrants. Historians today find it more difficult to employ the term “equality” in their descriptions of nineteenth-century America. Inequality, inequity, and injustice are often more suitable labels now that we are more sensitive to questions of gender, race, and class, not to mention slavery and ethnic cleansing. Yet, the writings of

---

<sup>285</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America, and Two Essays on America*, trans. Gerald Bevan (New York: Penguin, 2003 ), 66. The two volumes of *Democracy in America* were first published in 1835 and 1840.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, 656.

immigrants overwhelmingly confirm that if we compare with nineteenth-century Europe rather than twenty-first-century ideals, the rural Midwest was in some ways remarkable for its social and economic equality. To many immigrants, America was a place where landowners, maids, and workingmen ate at the same table: a place where manual labor was both respected and rewarded. Instead of stark class contrasts the Midwestern countryside offered a bland homogeneity, as one German farmer reported from Wisconsin:

The interiors of American houses are everywhere the same, tables, chairs, beds, ovens, windows, one manufacturer makes them the same as the other. The same goods and the same prices, it is the same with wagons, ploughs, and other agricultural implements, and if you have seen the interior of one house you have seen them all. It is the same with the buildings as well – stone houses of brick, all without external adornment.<sup>287</sup>

Part of the difficulty in understanding class and status differentials lies in the fact that there are different ways of conceptualizing what exactly we are talking about when we talk about equality and inequality. The anthropologist George De Vos has distinguished between two forms of exploitation dominant groups impose on the lower segments in society. He called the two forms instrumental exploitation and expressive exploitation. In the first instance, those enjoying a dominant position use other people as means to reach their own ends. For example, those who own land or capital can make use

---

<sup>287</sup> Johannes Kerler, letter to his brother, 17 February, 1850, in Frank, *Pionierjahre*, 63.

of the labor of others to increase their own wealth. This type of class relationship has been studied exhaustively. It is also open to “scientific” inquiries using quantitative measures to establish levels of economic inequality or social mobility in a society. What De Vos terms expressive exploitation, on the other hand, originates from more diffuse sources of dominance; it is expressed through everyday rituals and embedded in a society’s dominant values. This type of exploitation is far more difficult to pinpoint or to measure, and it is often overlooked by scholars.<sup>288</sup>

Those historians who have studied the social status and social mobility of immigrants most closely have relied on identifying aspects of status and mobility that could be measured and analyzed with the use of quantification. The new social history of the 1960s and 1970s established the methods used in these kinds of studies. In the seminal *The Other Bostonians*, for example, Stephan Thernstrom followed the occupational mobility of Bostonians across several decades, using census materials and city directories to classify the male population according to nativity and occupational stratum. Once these male Bostonians had been divided into immigrant, foreign-stock, and native, and their occupations divided into professional, other white collar, skilled, and low manual, conclusions could be drawn about the social mobility of the different groups over time.<sup>289</sup> Since then, several studies have attempted to measure social mobility as a result of transatlantic emigration, in other words, taking an individual’s last job in the old

---

<sup>288</sup> George A. De Vos, “Conflict, Dominance, and Exploitation: The Sacred and Expressive in Systems of Social Segregation,” in G. A. De Vos & M. Suarez-Orozco, *Status Inequality: The Self in Culture* (Newbury Park, Cal.: Sage, 1990), 161-162. The latter phenomenon would seem like fertile ground for psychological research, but unfortunately psychologists have tended to neglect issues of social class. See B. Lott & H. E. Bulloch, *Psychology and Economic Injustice: Personal, Professional, and Political Intersections* (Washington, D. C.: American Psychological Association, 2007), 3-8.

<sup>289</sup> Stephan Thernstrom, *The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880 – 1970* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 111-144.

country rather than his first job in the United States as the starting point.<sup>290</sup> In the most ambitious such study, Robert Swierenga studied Dutch immigrants who arrived in America between 1840 and 1870, combining Dutch emigration lists with American census manuscripts. Like Thernstrom, Swierenga relied on a hierarchical ranking of occupational categories: high white collar, low white collar, farmers, skilled and semiskilled workers, unskilled workers, farm laborers, and jobless.<sup>291</sup>

These studies have contributed to our understanding of occupational mobility in nineteenth- and twentieth-century America. Nevertheless, some of the assumptions they rest on are problematic.<sup>292</sup> They take for granted that occupation can be construed as a variable measured at an ordinal level, and also that occupations or occupational categories had the same meaning on both sides of the Atlantic. If being a farmer or farm laborer entailed very different things in America, remaining in the same occupational category might not constitute social immobility. As Dutch immigrant C. M. Budde-Stomp explained, the United States was an especially good country for “farm folk who can just go about doing their ordinary work; their station is the best here.”<sup>293</sup> Farming was the same, yet somehow better, in America.

What is missing from conventional studies of immigrants’ social status and mobility is the realization that social status is not an objective, timeless fact but a product

---

<sup>290</sup> Those studies that deal specifically with social mobility in the rural Midwestern context are discussed in the later chapter on agriculture.

<sup>291</sup> Robert Swierenga, *Faith and Family: Dutch Immigration and Settlement in the United States, 1820 – 1920* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 2000), 257-271.

<sup>292</sup> Unfortunately, “the validity of inferring social mobility from occupational mobility is virtually never examined,” as Stuart Blumin wrote in the 1970s. The situation does not seem to have improved much since then. Stuart Blumin, “Residential and Occupational Mobility in Antebellum Philadelphia,” in *Three Centuries of Social Mobility in America*, ed. Edward Pessen (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1974), 60.

<sup>293</sup> C. M. Budde-Stomp, letter to Mrs. J. Wormser-van der Ven, June 1848, in Stellingwerff, *Iowa Letters*, 107.

of a given sociocultural context. Status has an expressive and emotional dimension as well as a potentially quantifiable and measurable dimension. The fact that the latter is more accessible and better suited for being expressed in “scientific” language does not allow us to ignore the former.<sup>294</sup> Compared to the works of celebrated historians, the personal writings of European immigrants suggest a widely different understanding of what social status meant to them. This half of the chapter examines how they understood and expressed their social status. What should become obvious is that the changing context, in other words, the different ways in which status was conceptualized in America, often was just as important to their experience of social mobility as occupational and financial change.

Orphaned at the age of ten, Anna Swanson grew up in a boarding house in Sweden.<sup>295</sup> There she worked for her room and board under the supervision of a sadistic old maid, who beat and whipped her (with a raw hide whip) on a regular basis. In 1906, when she was fifteen, she learned of an opportunity to work as a domestic servant in the United States. Would she go? “Would I? Oh yes, oh yes, I’d go, no questions asked, to America, the land of gold!”<sup>296</sup> In her memoir, she remembered the opportunity to leave her miserable existence for the promised glory of America as so wonderful that she literally did not ask any questions. She left without knowing any details of her future whereabouts or circumstances.<sup>297</sup>

---

<sup>294</sup> For a discussion of this problem, see De Vos, “Self in Society: A Multilevel, Psychocultural Analysis,” in De Vos & Suarez-Orozco, *Status Inequality*, 18.

<sup>295</sup> For her story, see Swanson, *Orphan, Immigrant, Prairie Pioneer*.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-14.

Swanson's first moment of disappointment and disillusion came shortly after arriving in New York City. A city girl, she was devastated to hear that she would have to work on a farm in the country. In Sweden, "a farm girl... was considered one of the lowest class."<sup>298</sup> After a long journey, she arrived in Greeley, Nebraska, where she went to work for the Peterson family. As the family had paid for her ticket, they expected to give her no pay; she had to "work out" the expenses and was never given a contract. She had become a twentieth-century indentured servant.<sup>299</sup>

Whereas Swanson had expected "a land of gold," the Petersons were not particularly well off. On the contrary, their "moderate circumstances" along with Mrs. Peterson's rather eccentric attitudes and behavior drove the young girl to despair. In the summer of 1907, Mrs. Peterson went to Sweden for four months and left the overwhelmed sixteen-year-old Swanson to take care of the household and seven little boys by herself. Although she no longer had to suffer daily insults and physical abuse, staying with the Petersons was far from the experience she had expected in America. After three long years, she finally traveled to Lincoln to find a better place. There, she found a new job with a truly "American" family, the Richardsons. They had an ostentatious house, wonderful food, and paid wages. Among solidly middle class people, she finally found something reminiscent of her old American fantasy. Although she was still poor, subservient, and in the same occupation, the association with people of such stature seemed to raise her own status as well.<sup>300</sup>

---

<sup>298</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid., 16-17.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid., 16-26.



Throughout Swanson's depiction of her adolescence, the emphasis was as much on her longing for status and recognition as it was on poverty, hard work, and the brutal and exploitative behaviors of adults. It is possible that working in a boarding house with a diverse clientele made her especially aware of differences in status and class. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that someone who endured such extreme hardships even at an early age was so concerned with her place in society. The embarrassment of working on a struggling farm in the country or the shame of attending a dance without a new dress were painful memories. Status, in Anna Swanson's interpretation, was not necessarily about income or occupation, but rather about such things as being associated with the right people and wearing the right clothes. Thus she was able to interpret her position with the Richardsons relative to her own life-history. Her subjective experience of independence, freedom, and upward mobility where a historian might see dependence, poverty, and inferior status demonstrates the often glaring difference between interpretations of social status based on contextual and individual factors and interpretations based on more measurable criteria.

For those confined to the lower rungs of the status ladder in the old country, even modest comforts and minor gestures of social equality meant a great deal. Similarly, privileged Europeans accustomed to more stable and hierarchical status relations often found the leveling tendencies associated with cheap and easily available land disturbing. Dr. Hans Christian Brandt wrote a long, cautionary letter to friends back home in Norway.<sup>301</sup> He advised students of law, theology, and medicine to stay away from

---

<sup>301</sup> Hans Christian Brandt, letter to friends in Norway, 22 June, 1841, in Blegen, *Land of Their Choice*, 79-83.

America, where they would have to compete with all kinds of quacks and charlatans. In a passage calculated to horrify his educated audience, he revealed that “even competent graduates have had to take undignified jobs as bartenders.”<sup>302</sup> Well-off farmers, too, were best advised to stay where they were. High costs of labor and an overabundance of men made immigration to a frontier society with obvious cultural shortcomings an unwise venture.<sup>303</sup>

In Brandt’s view, emigration was a viable alternative only for poor country folk. Yet, his experience suggested that the influence of American conditions on such people was far from benign. All the farmers in the Norwegian colony he visited in Illinois had “a good deal of land” and “live[d] well,” but this improvement in circumstances had done little to improve their character:

For the most part they are ignorant, as unfamiliar with the institutions of their native country as with those of the United States, indifferent to the common good, and sometimes quarrelsome among themselves. Religion means nothing to them whatsoever; they have abandoned its principles completely, and they even leave their children unbaptized and bring them up in deep ignorance.<sup>304</sup>

This passage demonstrates that social status can be conceptualized in a variety of ways depending on the individual and the context. The Illinois Norwegians may have thought of themselves as moving up in the world by becoming well-fed and financially secure

---

<sup>302</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid., 82-83.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid., 81.

landowners, and the economic historian would be likely to agree. Brandt, however, saw their economic success as far less significant than their ignorance and irreligion. To compare such people with the better kind, represented by himself, was unthinkable.

This dissertation is in part an attempt to look at the immigration to the rural Midwest from the perspective of the individual, recognizing the element of contingency and the great diversity in backgrounds and experiences across vast stretches of time and space. However, I have found immigrants' writings on the topic of social status remarkably consistent, so much so that a kind of generalization seems warranted. Typically, those from lower class backgrounds found greater social equality in America, and saw it as one of the country's most attractive features. Conversely, those from a more elevated station tended to see the same social equality as an inappropriate conflation of social categories. Although these tendencies may have been most pronounced early in the era of immigration, immigrants continued to describe social relationships in the United States in these terms into the twentieth century.

Carl Pritzlaff came to the United States as one of the Prussian Old Lutherans who emigrated rather than accept union with the Reformed Church. In a letter home, he asserted that it was impossible for Prussians to understand how farm families lived in America. It was a "more sensible" and "freer" way of life, a haven for the working man:

For a man who works, it is much better here than there; one can earn his daily bread better here than in Germany, and one does not live in such a restricted manner and under such subservience as you do under the landowner. We don't have to press our hats under our arms, or leave them

at the door when we want to collect our wages. An equality seems to rule here among the people of America... The well-born and the rich are not ashamed to associate with the poor and lowly. If one man works for another, he is not bound to do so for a definite time, but leaves when he wishes to; every man is his own master.<sup>305</sup>

Although some writers painted a rosy-red picture of America, many hinted at the common conception that it was not an equally suitable environment for everyone. Those who were used to having the finer things and enjoyed leisure and privilege in Europe might not be so happy on the other side of the Atlantic. In the days when Norwegian emigration was still a new and controversial phenomenon, one immigrant wrote from Illinois that

surely no sensible man could wish for a better place. But even so, many people are dissatisfied with everything, especially those who are full of ambition. They bother others with their regrets and pine for the ceremonies and compliments of the fine world. We set little store by that sort of thing here. We who have worked since childhood feel that this is Canaan when we consider the fertile soil that without manuring brings forth such rich crops of everything. Norway cannot be compared to America any more than a desert can be compared to a garden in full bloom.<sup>306</sup>

---

<sup>305</sup> Johann Carl Wilhelm Pritzlaff, letter to August Pritzlaff, April 23, 1842, in *Freistadt and the Lutheran Immigration*, ed. Alice Frenz et al. (Mequon, Wisc.: Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church of Freistadt, 1998), 24.

<sup>306</sup> Gjert Hovland, letter to a friend in Norway, 6 July, 1838, in Blegen, *Land of Their Choice*, 45.

Like many others, this immigrant concluded that those who grew up poor and remembered their old burdens would be happy, while those used to better things would be disappointed if they thought they could prosper without hard work. However, for those willing to work hard, the rewards were greater than in Norway.<sup>307</sup>

Thirty-five years later, German immigrant Peter Krupp found that the rewards for hard work remained much greater in Illinois than in Europe. His wages were five times higher than what he had earned at home:

Here one knows what one is working for... here the poverty is not so great as in Germany. Here we eat more meat than you eat bread. A hundred pounds of meat costs 4 dollars and one can earn that much in two days. Dear parents, you won't believe what it is like in America. He who has to earn his living by manual labor eats and drinks better than the richest man in Germany.<sup>308</sup>

Yet, making more money and eating and drinking better was not the whole story. When Danish immigrant Jørgen Jørgensen arrived in the United States in 1890, he soon noticed the differences in how people looked at work and social status:

One of the first things that struck me, when we came to this country, was that they do not look down upon manual labor, like we were used to from home. An American cannot understand, that there should be something

---

<sup>307</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>308</sup> Peter Krupp, letter to his parents and siblings, 8 June, 1873, in Roland Paul, "Ihr kent eich kein bekrif machen wis in Amerika ist: Briefe Pfälzischer Auswanderer und ihre Bedeutung für die Forschung," in *Die Auswanderung nach Nordamerika aus den Regionen des heutigen Rheinland-Pfalz*, ed. W. Kremp & R. Paul (Trier: WVT, 2002), 57.

undignified about a doctor, preacher, or public official milking his own cow, it was similarly very strange to go into a government office and be treated with courtesy.<sup>309</sup>

Rituals and customs designed to maintain social hierarchies often disappeared on American soil. Andreas Hjerpeland explained that the Norwegians in Minnesota retained some of their customs, but had shed others:

One Norwegian custom that has been abandoned is the damnable one that dictated that the workers and servants in many places had to eat in the kitchen and were scarcely allowed to stick their heads into the owner's parlor. Here in America everyone eats at the same table.<sup>310</sup>

To higher-ups accustomed to a certain hierarchy and distance in social relations, the equality and informality characteristic of rural Midwestern society could be difficult to bear. Immigrants from higher status backgrounds frequently complained of embarrassing incidents, impertinent people, or the state of social relations more generally. Some found interacting with their presumed inferiors so taxing that they gave up on hiring workers entirely. As Theodor van Dreveldt explained to a friend at home,

you are probably thinking that I was wrong not to hire people to help with the work. One reason for that is the uncomfortable relationship

---

<sup>309</sup> Jørgen Jørgensen, *Lifserindringer* (unpubl., n. d.), 17.

<sup>310</sup> Andreas Hjerpeland, letter to Ivar Kleven, 6 April, 1878, in Zempel, *In Their Own Words*, 13-14.

(for Europeans) that exists when one has to live with such people. They see themselves as the complete equals of those who hire them and think nothing of eating at the same table. They are always in your room and act much the way an intimate friend would in Europe; they allow themselves every imaginable liberty. This is made somewhat bearable by the fact that even the most average American is at a much higher stage of civilization than any of our compatriots of the same class. When they come here, ours suddenly become idiots. As a result, I would rather work alone than be subject to such unpleasant company.<sup>311</sup>

In her autobiography and a letter to her brother in Germany, Henriette Bruns wrote about the harrowing experience of one Mr. Hesse, a former government official from Westphalia. Having arrived in Missouri with “a teacher, secretary, workmen, and a maid,” Hesse soon encountered difficulties. Mrs. Hesse cried and lamented her new situation, as they were “the only refined family in the settlement.”<sup>312</sup> The workers failed to meet their employer’s expectations, but nevertheless demanded American wages. As Bruns saw it, Hesse’s failure in America was a result of the “irresponsible claims of his former domestic help;” at any rate, Mrs. Hesse finally persuaded her husband that they had to return to Germany.<sup>313</sup> Simply transplanting the labor and social relations prevalent in Europe to an American setting was an unrealistic enterprise.

---

<sup>311</sup> Theodor van Dreveltdt, letter to Franz von Weise, March 1848, in Kronenberg, *Life and Letters*, 77.

<sup>312</sup> Excerpt from Henriette Bruns’ autobiography, in Schroeder & Schulz-Geisberg, *Hold Dear, As Always*, 71.

<sup>313</sup> Henriette Bruns, letter to Heinrich Geisberg, 7 September, 1837, in Schroeder & Schulz-Geisberg, *Hold Dear, As Always*, 80.

Hans Olsen Thorud wrote another cautionary story, describing the plight of a Norwegian immigrant. A former landowner, this “G.” now lived off of other people’s charity. His one daughter had married a mountain peasant, the other was a servant girl, and a son had at one time worked as a woodcutter. They had, in other words, been completely declassed as a result of their transatlantic migration.<sup>314</sup> Time and time again, immigrant writers pointed out that American social mobility could work both ways, upward and downward. As Gjert Hovland put it, “I do not advise anyone in Norway who is making a good living there to leave it....”<sup>315</sup>

Those who saw themselves as educated and cultured people often found it difficult to thrive in an atmosphere so suffused with republican and democratic ideals. Even frontier living usually involved a fair amount of social interaction with other members of the community. To quite a few immigrants of high birth or great pretension, this was the most distasteful aspect of living in America. Caja Munch at one point claimed that there was only one thing she missed in the new country:

the company of cultured people instead of these silly peasants, who for the most part cannot comprehend at all that we are a step above them and have more requirements. No, they regard themselves maybe fully as high and always say *Du* [thou], and many such things, which sometimes really are highly ridiculous... For example, many will simply call me Caja. Here are

---

<sup>314</sup> Hans Olsen Thorud, letter to friends in Norway, 27 January, 1851, in Blegen, *Land of Their Choice*, 174.

<sup>315</sup> Gjert Hovland, letter to a friend in Norway, 6 July, 1838, in Blegen, *Land of Their Choice*, 45.



not even any cultured Americans as we are too far inland where only speculators and such rubbish are roving.<sup>316</sup>

Although America offered freedom and economic opportunity, there were also “a lot of petty and crude country folk,” as Johannes Kerler, Jr. put it.<sup>317</sup> To Caja Munch, the one-room log cabins where “they sometimes suckle two or three urchins at the same time right in front of our eyes, [and] they clean them up also – hush!” were prime examples of the barbarism of rural Wisconsin.<sup>318</sup> Similarly, the traveling scholar Ole Munch Ræder found only a few homes in Wisconsin with such signs of civilization as candle-snuffers and handkerchiefs. Like Munch, he observed severe shortcomings in etiquette. Handkerchiefs were used “rather economically, after the major operation has been performed with the fingers,” and this was the practice among even “the most elegantly attired gentlemen.”<sup>319</sup> Those who aspired to social prominence in the rural Midwest faced at least two major obstacles: the lack of subservient people prepared to concede their own inferiority, and the lack of opportunities to interact with worthy others who could validate their own status.

To the majority accustomed to humbler circumstances, the solution to this problem was simple: the wealthy and privileged should just stay in Europe. As Ellef Bjørnsen Tangen put it, “if you cannot or do not want to work, then stay at home.”<sup>320</sup>

---

<sup>316</sup> Caja Munch, letter to Mr. & Mrs. F. W. S. Falch, 25 November, 1855 – 15 February, 1856, in *The Strange American Way*, 30.

<sup>317</sup> Johannes Kerler, Jr., letter to August Frank, 27 March, 1850, in Frank, *Pionierjahre*, 70.

<sup>318</sup> Caja Munch, letter to Mr. & Mrs. F. W. S. Falch, 25 November, 1855 – 15 February, 1856, in *The Strange American Way*, 25-26.

<sup>319</sup> Ole Munch Ræder, letter to Norway, September – October, 1847, in Blegen, *Land of Their Choice*, 218.

<sup>320</sup> Ellef Bjørnsen Tangen, letter to relatives in Norway, 14 January, 1844, in Blegen, *Land of Their Choice*, 189.

Ernst Stille claimed that the only truly happy immigrants were those who had been “used to hard work in Germany and with toil and great pains could hardly even earn their daily bread....”<sup>321</sup> Responding to the critical writings of Pastor Dietrichson, Nils Hansen Nærum explained why the United States was the land of the common people:

It does not take a man like Mr. Dietrichson to judge a new country and the situation of its inhabitants – a man who all his life has been in the best of circumstances and who has never experienced personally what it means to have to support yourself by work in Norway. Nor has he taken the trouble to familiarize himself with the lot of the common people in Norway, which he should have done before he took it upon himself to give an account of the Norwegians in America and of the American nation in particular [...] As soon as a man has become known as honest and dependable, he is just as respected here as anyone. Farmers and artisans are just as good as merchants and officials.<sup>322</sup>

The theme of equality of status recurs throughout both the private and public writings of immigrants. The common man had to expect hard manual labor, but most writers agreed that hard work would be more generously rewarded in the United States than in Europe. In America, one could make money, eat and drink well, and acquire property. However, this was not necessarily the most important aspect of improving one's

---

<sup>321</sup> Ernst Stille, letter to friends in Germany, 20 May, 1847, in Kamphoefner et al., *News from the Land of Freedom*, 85.

<sup>322</sup> Nils Hansen Nærum, letter to J. H. Nærum, 16 November, 1845, in Blegen, *Land of Their Choice*, 198-199.

social status. At least as important as such tangible rewards was the feeling of recognition and dignity working people felt when they interacted with landowners, clergy, and government officials as relative equals. To be a servant meant only a temporary contractual relationship, not permanent inferiority embedded in a thousand rituals of submission. Farmhands and maids ate at the same table as their employers, and no one was required to take off his hat for another. People of different classes even dressed much the same, and often lived in similar houses. Those who had left societies where aristocrats, officeholders, and gentry found their dignity and distinction in the ritual humiliation of the lower classes were generally happy to part with such traditions, provided they had not previously belonged to one of the former groups.

When immigrants discussed issues like work and status in their writings, they often claimed that the differences were greater for women than for men. Referring to one of his acquaintances, Ernst Stille wrote that

[F. Katkamp] says I have to work here like in Germany but things are better for my wife and children, and that's what it's like for everyone I've met here, the women have nothing to do except cook the food and keep things clean, that's all the servant girls here do too, but the men have to eat the bread in the sweat of the brow....<sup>323</sup>

Men of many different nationalities and backgrounds noted the differences in women's tasks in America. A letter from Norwegian immigrants described the difficulty men had

---

<sup>323</sup> Ernst Stille, letter to friends in Germany, 20 May, 1847, in Kamphoefner et al., *News from the Land of Freedom*, 85.

finding work in northern Illinois during the winter. The best paid jobs were in canal building, but that kind of work involved hard physical labor, a Babel of foreign tongues, rampant disease, and frequent work stoppages during which no pay could be expected. It was much easier for women to find suitable work (in domestic service). Even in Chicago, with the constant influx of immigrants, “Norwegian girls are in great demand.”<sup>324</sup> In addition to the demand for female labor, these Norwegian writers also reported that women were held in high regard in America, and “they are exempt from all kinds of outdoor work and so are far less exposed to disease.”<sup>325</sup> Ture Gustafson suggested that his sister in Sweden might like it in South Dakota, since “for girls there is generally not hard work here.”<sup>326</sup> According to the Hanoverian immigrant Johann Heinrich zur Oeveste, “the menfolk must usually work harder here [than at home], but the women and girls have it better and only perform household chores.”<sup>327</sup> Carl Pritzlaff, too, observed that “one never sees American womenfolk working out-of-doors, and they go about very well-dressed.”<sup>328</sup>

Most men seem to have believed that both farmers’ wives and female domestic servants had it easier in the United States, and that the status of women was higher as well. “Here a wife must be treated like a wife and not like a scrub rag like I saw in Germany,” Christian Lenz explained in recounting the story a fellow immigrant who had

---

<sup>324</sup> Anders Wiig et al., letter to friends in Norway, 11 January, 1841, in Blegen, *Land of Their Choice*, 76.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid.

<sup>326</sup> Ture Gustafson, letter to Hilma Gustafson, September 1901, in Warnander, *Tre Bröder – Ett Amerika*, 34.

<sup>327</sup> Johann Heinrich zur Oeveste, letter to Rudolf zur Oeveste, 2 April, 1856, in “*Ferner thue ich euch zu wissen*”: *Briefe des Johann Heinrich zur Oeveste aus Amerika (1834 – 1876)*, ed. Antonius Holtmann (Bremen: Edition Temmen, 1995), 43.

<sup>328</sup> Pritzlaff, letter to August Pritzlaff, April 23, 1842, in Frenz et al., *Freistadt and the Lutheran Immigration*, 23.

become estranged from his wife.<sup>329</sup> Some men saw the cult of domesticity and the relative equality of the sexes as unfortunate or even ridiculous. Wilhelm Stille thought women in America “too lazy to go and get [the cows] if they don’t have a horse and a saddle, there’s nothing they’d rather do than ride around a bit and go to the stores and buy all kinds of things... and to sleep late in the morning.”<sup>330</sup> When his mother in Norway asked about American women in one of her letters, Frithjof Meidell found few redeeming qualities. In the United States, women

dress in bad taste, since all they are interested in is to have very expensive-looking clothes. Besides they are unforgivably lazy, truly pampered creatures. All day they sit quietly in a rocking chair and rock themselves, and then they sew a little once in a while by way of change.<sup>331</sup>

Meidell saved his most vitriolic satire for the upwardly mobile women from his own homeland:

You ought to see our Norwegian peasant girls and servant girls here. You would not be able to recognize them or even think that these lovely creatures had been transplanted from the rocky ground of Norway to this tropical soil. Big-heeled, round-shouldered, plump, good-natured cooks who at home waddled about in all their primitiveness in front of the

---

<sup>329</sup> Christian Lenz, letter to his brother, 7 January, 1868, in Kamphoefner, et al., *News from the Land of Freedom*, 139.

<sup>330</sup> Wilhelm Stille, letter to his parents and sibling, 16 February, 1836, in Kamphoefner, et al., *News from the Land of Freedom*, 70.

<sup>331</sup> Frithjof Meidell, letter to his mother, May 1854, in Blegen, *Land of Their Choice*, 306.

kitchen fire between brooms and garbage cans, here trip about with a peculiar, affected twisting of parasols and fans and with their pretty heads completely covered with veils. Aase, Birthe, and Siri at an incredible speed become changed to Aline, Betsy, and Sarah, and these ladies like to have a little “Miss” in front of their names.<sup>332</sup>

There can be little doubt that men’s attitudes to women’s work tended to belittle and trivialize what was very demanding and indeed exhausting labor as “only housework.” C. M. Budde-Stomp was so busy planting and weeding in the garden, milking the cows, making soap, washing everything every two weeks, and feeding large numbers of people three times a day that she could not even find time to mend the children’s clothes. An urban woman who had to learn many new skills on the farm, she felt privileged to live in the United States, and did not miss city life. Nevertheless, “the increased load of housework does draw out the perspiration.”<sup>333</sup>

To some extent we must remain suspicious that the descriptions men gave of female leisure may primarily have indicated their devaluation of women’s work. However, many women also described their everyday lives in America as radically different from the drudgery they had known in Europe. As Elisabeth Klein put it,

---

<sup>332</sup> Ibid., 307.

<sup>333</sup> C. M. Budde-Stomp, letter to Mrs. J. Wormser-van der Ven, June 1848, in Stellingwerff, *Iowa Letters*, 107.

this way of life is quite different from what it is Birkenau. For females it is a marvelously good country. Washing and baking is their work. They behave like noblewomen, whether rich or poor, it is the same for all.<sup>334</sup>

Anna Larson similarly reported that as a domestic servant, “my work is to prepare meals, besides washing clothes and ironing. I never have to do anything outside the house, not so much as to carry in wood and water.”<sup>335</sup> Many immigrant women, and perhaps especially those who worked as domestic servants both in Europe and the United States, found that they had a more limited number of tasks to perform, more spare time, and more disposable income to spend or save. The rural Midwest could be good poor man’s country, but it was good poor woman’s country as well. Especially for young women who lacked opportunities and marriage prospects at home, America had much to offer.

Some scholars have described rural life in nineteenth-century America as having advantages compared to urban living for women, pointing out that the work women did made them important contributors to the economy of the farm household. This emphasis on complementarity and harmony has been rejected by Deborah Fink, who has argued that rural women experienced the same inequalities as other women in American society.<sup>336</sup> Obviously, rural immigrant women were not fully equal to men, nor were they necessarily relatively speaking as close to equal to men as native-born American women were. The point here is that because of the different conceptions of class and gender in

---

<sup>334</sup> Elisabeth Klein, letter to her parents, 1831, in *Hessisches Auswandererbuch: Berichte, Chroniken und Dokumente zur Geschichte hessischer Einwanderer in den Vereinigten Staaten, 1683 – 1983* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1983), 404.

<sup>335</sup> Anna Larson, letter to family in Sweden, July 22, 1883, in *Mom’s Letters Home*, ed. & trans. Esther Larson (unpublished, 1971), 14.

<sup>336</sup> Deborah Fink, *Agrarian Women: Wives and Mothers in Rural Nebraska, 1880 – 1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

the United States, many immigrant women, especially immigrant women of the lower classes, experienced a substantial improvement in their status.<sup>337</sup>

That men sometimes resented or ridiculed these developments is not surprising. Clergymen felt the same way about their parishioners, masters about their servants, and the highborn about the working people when they confronted similar processes of leveling and role change. The common thread is that in all these cases, the change from the European to the American social and cultural context immediately altered power relationships and interpretations of status. As European social categories had limited relevance in America, attempts at wholesale transplantation of such categories were necessarily futile.

In *Riches, Class, and Power Before the Civil War*, Edward Pessen ridiculed Tocqueville and cast scorn upon all who had proclaimed an “era of the common man” in the second quarter of the nineteenth century.<sup>338</sup> According to Pessen, the differences between rich and poor in the period were great at the beginning and increased over time. Tocqueville’s experience in America – “nothing struck me more forcibly than the general equality of condition among the people” – Pessen used as an ironic epigraph for a chapter on the uneven distribution of wealth.<sup>339</sup> Like the works by Thernstrom and Swierenga, *Riches, Class, and Power* was based on meticulous collection of quantitative data, specifically figures pulled from the tax rolls of New York City, Brooklyn, Boston, and

---

<sup>337</sup> The native-born liked to portray immigrant men as patriarchs who exploited the women in their families in ways Yankees would not. See Chapter 4 for a more detailed examination of this stereotype and its enduring legacies in American historiography.

<sup>338</sup> Edward Pessen, *Riches, Class, and Power Before the Civil War* (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1973).

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.



Philadelphia. Based on his findings, Pessen concluded that the notion of an age of equality and social mobility before the Civil War was an illusion.

Let us leave to one side the fact that Pessen drew this conclusion after examining four large cities in a period when 85 to 90 percent of Americans lived in the country or in very small towns. The more important question is: when Tocqueville and other nineteenth-century observers talked about equality as a characteristic of the United States, were they really talking about something that can be confirmed or dismissed by collecting tax assessments? At least as far as rural Midwestern immigrants are concerned, I think it is fair to answer no to that question. The point they made over and over again was not that all in America had the same amount of money or the same prospects for working in white-collar occupations, but rather that even the poor and those who toiled in lowly occupation experienced greater rewards for their labor and, above all, recognition as the equals of the rich and powerful. Some scholars will surely object that the inequalities Pessen found were more important and more real than the equality these immigrants experienced. Maybe so. But to those who had taken orders, bowed, stood aside, and pressed their hats under their arms for many years, social recognition had a significance that we hardly have the right to trivialize.

In the second half of this chapter, I have hoped to show that how immigrants thought about status and mobility was influenced to a great extent by their own life histories and the differences in context between the places they left and the places where they settled. There was usually less formality, distance, and deference in gestures, comportment, terms of address, and everyday speech in the rural Midwest, and immigrants were forced to adjust to these aspects of American life whether they liked it

or not. Those who were committed to maintaining and confirming their own superiority in everyday interactions were sometimes distressed by this, but most immigrants seem to have appreciated what they interpreted as greater equality.

How individual immigrants interpreted their own positions in American society thus depended as much on their attitudes toward the American class system as on their national origins. While historians have been very concerned with how the native-born felt about immigrants, this was in most cases apparently not that important to the immigrants themselves. The point of view established in individual immigrant writings also differs significantly from the organized expressions of ethnic sentiments in ethnic organizations, suggesting that the study of personal and private understandings of status and ethnicity can be valuable to historians seeking a more complete understanding of the immigrant experience.

#### 4: IMMIGRANTS AND AGRICULTURE: A CASE STUDY

“The devil should be a farmer,” said the Swedish man, as he fumbled through the snow-covered hay stack to find feed for his cows.<sup>340</sup> Farming in western Minnesota, or anywhere in the Midwest, could be more difficult than the steamboat and railroad agents had promised. But although farming could be challenging and dangerous, it was often lucrative as well. Hans Mattson remembered an incredible abundance in the Galesburg, Illinois area where he was a young man in the 1850s. One man had so many chickens that he let anyone pick a basket full of eggs for 10 cents, and beef and pork was so plentiful that it barely had any commercial value at all locally.<sup>341</sup> For better or worse, American farming was different from European farming. To Peter Maretich, utilizing American, “all modern” agricultural technology meant a “change from A to Z.”<sup>342</sup> Whereas in Croatia they had only had oxen, farming in Wisconsin meant horse-drawn equipment and, eventually, tractors. While in Croatia only the rich had iron plows, American machinery allowed him and other farmers to turn the subsoil up, thus greatly increasing productivity and attaining an unprecedented standard of living: “we had – we could call it a Christmas feast every day compared to what we had in Croatia.”<sup>343</sup>

When immigrants wrote home about their farming experiences in America, the most common themes were abundance, advanced technology, and differences in women’s work. Newcomers from Northern Europe sometimes resented having to do harvest work in the intense heat, and many immigrants were skeptical at first when they

---

<sup>340</sup> Hansen, *Da jeg kom til Minnesota*, 9.

<sup>341</sup> Hans Mattson, *Reminiscences: The Story of an Emigrant* (St. Paul: D. D. Merrill, 1891), 29.

<sup>342</sup> Interview with Peter Maretich, *Ethnic History of Wisconsin Project*, 2. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives.

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-4, quote on p. 4.

saw that Americans kept their cattle outside all year round. However, most observations about American agriculture were matter-of-fact in nature, and expressed an attitude of acceptance – “this is the way things are done here.” Most immigrants were pragmatic and moderately ambitious, prepared to adapt to changing circumstances in order to achieve the financial and social status they had hoped for when they left.

American historians have, however, continued to portray the European peasant and the more bourgeois Yankee as contrasting types. In *The Minds of the West*, Jon Gjerde described these differences as mindsets or mentalities that influenced conduct and shaped the development of the region. Ethnic origins, Gjerde claimed, determined the household structure and a variety of economic decisions on the farm. Yankee farmers were rid of corporate obligations, free to sell the farm at the time of retirement. The immigrant farmer, on the other hand, sought to maintain the farm in the lineage, as had been the custom in Europe. Since landownership was a good in itself for the European American, he would be more intent on retaining his land. Less purely capitalist than the native American, he would also be less oriented toward markets and profit. The European patriarch, envisioning the family as a corporate entity with a common interest, saw nothing wrong in utilizing his wife and children as farm laborers. Thus he was less likely to require the labor-saving machinery eagerly adopted by Yankee farmers.<sup>344</sup>

Gjerde’s typology draws heavily on Horace Miner’s *Culture and Agriculture*, an anthropological study conducted in the 1930s.<sup>345</sup> Although Miner’s differentiation between native and immigrant derives primarily from the post-World War I era, Gjerde

---

<sup>344</sup> Jon Gjerde, *The Minds of the West. Ethnocultural Evolution in the Rural Middle West, 1830 – 1917* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), see especially 159-185.

<sup>345</sup> Horace Miner, *Culture and Agriculture. An Anthropological Study of a Corn Belt County* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1949).

seems to be appropriating it for an earlier period (*Minds of the West* covers the years 1830 – 1917). Miner argued that Yankees tended to engage in speculative activity more than Germans and Norwegians, who continued to perceive farming as a way of life. The evidence, however, is quite limited, and there is little indication that whatever differences existed in the interwar era justify broad generalizations about the nineteenth century. Miner's work is simply not a sophisticated anthropological study from which one may confidently draw conclusions about cultural difference and its importance for agriculture. More generally, it is questionable whether anthropological and sociological studies conducted in the twentieth century should be considered appropriate sources for generalizations about nineteenth century farming.

By contrast, geographers have frequently adopted historical approaches to this subject matter. The most specialized study of immigrant agriculture in the nineteenth century is, in fact, geographer Terry Jordan's work on German farmers in Texas.<sup>346</sup> Although outside the geographic scope of this dissertation, *German Seed in Texas Soil* is mentioned here because it speaks to the more general question of immigrant adaptation. German emigration started while Texas still belonged to Mexico, and by the 1850s there were large German populations in Galveston, Houston, and San Antonio and in the surrounding rural areas. Germans settled both in the "Cotton Kingdom" and, later, on the Plains frontier. Jordan's work constituted a careful examination of German farmers in both areas, indicating that many of the supposed traits of ethnic distinctiveness were mythical rather than real. Germans were not universally anti-slavery and unionist, nor did

---

<sup>346</sup> Terry Jordan, *German Seed in Texas Soil: Immigrant Farmers in Nineteenth-Century Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966).

they introduce any important crops or livestock to the state. Texas Germans grew corn, cotton, and sweet potatoes; and let their livestock roam the open range – they “became southerners almost from the very first.”<sup>347</sup> Jordan found that European activities which made little economic sense in America (given physical and market conditions) were discarded rapidly, while others that did not threaten viability could be maintained. He also argued that Germans did continue to practice more intensive and more productive agriculture, as known from Europe, but the evidence is not particularly convincing. For example, 1879 census data from eastern Texas show that the Germans produced .45 bales of cotton per acre and 17.3 bushels of corn per acre, compared to .42 bales of cotton and 16.9 bushels of corn for non-German whites.<sup>348</sup> With such minuscule differences, and knowing the approximate nature of agricultural census data, this really does not amount to reliable evidence of superior productivity at all.

The most significant theoretical contribution in Jordan’s work was the concept of “cultural rebound,” the idea that German settlers abandoned some of their traditional practices in early years, yet revived them at a latter time.<sup>349</sup> Jordan failed to note that the phenomenon of shedding habits temporarily in early settlements is a fundamental element of Turnerian thought about the frontier. Immigrant letters tend to confirm Jordan’s and Turner’s ideas in this regard; many lived simply at first and later ordered the seed, bushes, and trees that would grow into reminders of home. But these mainly served a symbolic and emotional function, they were place-making devices that reproduced some sensory experiences and evoked fond memories without aiming toward an unrealistic re-

---

<sup>347</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid., see Table 25, 108.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid., 199-200.

creation of a European farm on an American homestead. They made immigrant's everyday lands more like home, but not in a literal sense like the homes they had left behind.

Jordan's work cast some doubt on the traditional stereotype of the superior German farmer, often hailed as the opposite of the short-sighted and environmentally irresponsible American speculator-capitalist. A more recent work on German immigrants in a rural setting is Walter Kamphoefner's study of Westfalians in Missouri.<sup>350</sup> *The Westfalians*, although a more broadly conceived work about the transplantation of a group of German immigrants, also includes numerous observations concerning the farming practices of Missouri Germans. Kamphoefner, like Jordan, found that Germans were much less likely than native-born whites to own slaves. He attributed this partially to class differences, but indicated that Germans in every category of wealth had fewer slaves than other whites. Germans were also more likely to own land than other groups (not only compared to old-stock Anglo- and Franco-Americans, but compared to other European immigrants as well). On the other hand, Kamphoefner's data do not support the idea that Germans farmed more intensively or more productively. On the contrary, the opposite seems to have been the case. Germans and other farmers seem to have made largely the same crop and livestock choices, with the exception that Germans very rarely grew tobacco. Kamphoefner concluded that "the similarities of immigrant and native agricultural patterns clearly outweigh the differences."<sup>351</sup>

---

<sup>350</sup> Walter Kamphoefner, *The Westfalians. From Germany to Missouri* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.*, 115-134, quotation on p. 132.

Paul Gates suggested that the immigrant-packed Mississippi Valley in the second half of the nineteenth century saw an unprecedented number of working farmers gain ownership and prosper on their farms.<sup>352</sup> This is a hypothesis supported by a number of other works, which have also tended to confirm that immigrant farmers “adjusted rapidly and without apparent difficulty” to new environments.<sup>353</sup> As early as 1959, Merle Curti in his seminal *Making of an American Community* found that even those groups usually considered to have been severely disadvantaged by the miserable conditions in their European homelands, such as the Irish and Poles, were able to prosper on the Wisconsin frontier.<sup>354</sup> Both Seddie Cogswell and D. Aidan McQuillan emphasized that the foreign-born in the rural Midwest tended to be ambitious and resourceful rather than living up to the myth of the poor, old-fashioned peasant.<sup>355</sup> McQuillan found no evidence that the immigrant groups generally struggled economically or fell behind native-stock American farmers in material terms in central Kansas from 1875 to 1925.<sup>356</sup> Of an earlier period, Jeremy Atack and Fred Bateman wrote that immigrants “never became a nation of peasants hesitant to change.”<sup>357</sup> The most definitive study of transatlantic occupational mobility; in Robert Swierenga’s book *Faith and Family*; shows that the overwhelming majority of Dutch immigrants arriving in the United States between 1841 and 1870 had improved or maintained their occupational status by the latter date. “Climbers”

---

<sup>352</sup> Paul Gates, *Landlords and Tenancy on the Prairie Frontier. Studies in American Land Policy* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1973), 313.

<sup>353</sup> Robert Swierenga, “Ethnicity and American Agriculture,” *Ohio History* 89 (1980), 335.

<sup>354</sup> Merle Curti, *Making of an American Community: A Case Study of Democracy in a Frontier County* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959) 186-192, 443.

<sup>355</sup> Seddie Cogswell, Jr., *Tenure, Nativity and Age as Factors in Iowa Agriculture, 1850 – 1880* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1975); D. Aidan McQuillan, *Prevailing over Time: Ethnic Adjustment on the Kansas Prairies, 1875 – 1925* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990).

<sup>356</sup> McQuillan, *Prevailing over Time*, 156-157.

<sup>357</sup> Jeremy Atack & Fred Bateman, *To Their Own Soil: Agriculture in the Antebellum North* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1987), 85.



outnumbered “skidders” by 5:1 in the cohort arriving between 1841 and 1850, and of farm laborers in that cohort 90 percent had become farm operators in their own right by 1860.<sup>358</sup> Kamphoefner, in his work on the Missouri Germans, also found high social mobility and rapid advancement to property and sometimes outright prosperity.<sup>359</sup>

In the classic study *From Prairie to Corn Belt*, Allan Bogue pointed out that two types of arguments have been made about the transfer of agricultural practices from Europe to the Midwest. The first proposition identified by Bogue was that Europeans introduced certain skills, technologies, and seed varieties from the Old World.<sup>360</sup> As Theodore Saloutos suggested in his article on the “immigrant contribution” to American agriculture, Europeans brought new “farm techniques, crops, and rural industries” to the United States.<sup>361</sup> The most famous such contribution was perhaps the introduction of hard winter wheat of the “Turkey” variety by German-Russians on the Great Plains. It would be difficult to deny the significance of importation of European seed varieties, livestock breeds, and agricultural methods, although their economic importance has not thus far been systematically evaluated. The other proposition identified by Bogue, that “members of ethnocultural groups farmed in ways that were significantly different from the practices followed by others with different backgrounds,” has tended to find little support in the work of historians and historically oriented geographers.<sup>362</sup> Bogue suggested that cultural differences were “more apparent than real” and “less important when the farmer

---

<sup>358</sup> Robert Swierenga, *Faith and Family*, 257-271.

<sup>359</sup> Kamphoefner, *The Westfalians*, 135-143.

<sup>360</sup> Allan Bogue, *From Prairie to Corn Belt. Farming on the Illinois and Iowa Prairies in the Nineteenth Century*. (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1994 [1963]), 237.

<sup>361</sup> Theodore Saloutos, “The Immigrant Contribution to American Agriculture,” *Agricultural History* 50 (1976), 46.

<sup>362</sup> Bogue, *From Prairie to Corn Belt*. 237.

decided on his combination of major enterprises.”<sup>363</sup> Bogue’s findings from the Midwestern prairies thus mirror what Jordan found in the case of Texas.

Saloutos’ article is of particular interest because it is a relatively recent example of the type of argument often found in works published prior to the extensive use of quantitative methods. Saloutos made a number of broad statements about various ethnic groups; for example, he claimed that Czech immigrants tended to see in farming a way of life more than an avenue to capitalist profit.<sup>364</sup> He also argued that immigrant farmers were the bulwark of family farming in “a society that made it difficult for the family farm to survive.”<sup>365</sup> This latter comment seems particularly misleading; in the nineteenth century, at least, many Europeans arrived in rural America exactly because American society facilitated the establishment of family farms. There were even many who had not been farmers or farm laborers in Europe who came to the United States to farm.

The stereotype of the European immigrant as a persistent and geographically immobile farmer endowed with a special love for the soil remains, but has found only limited support in empirical investigations. Several studies have found mobility to be a striking feature of frontier life, with frequent moves by people of all ages and ethnic origins. Curti found higher rates of turnover among immigrants than among the native-born in Trempeleau County.<sup>366</sup> Cogswell, studying farmers in eastern Iowa, found that although the foreign-born were somewhat more likely to persist in a community over time, both native-born and foreign-born groups (and owners *and* tenants) were

---

<sup>363</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>364</sup> Saloutos, “The Immigrant Contribution,” 58.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>366</sup> Curti, *Making of an American Community*, 69-76.

characterized by great geographical mobility.<sup>367</sup> McQuillan similarly found high turnover on Kansas farms among all three ethnic groups he studied: Mennonites, Swedes, and French Canadians. He furthermore noted that although Americans were slightly more mobile, the high mobility of immigrant groups was not a result of Americanization. In fact, immigrant farmers living in more homogeneous ethnic communities were no less likely to leave than those living in mixed communities.<sup>368</sup>

These studies have also demonstrated that the typical European immigrant was not a technophobic peasant. According to Oscar Handlin, immigrants struggled with new equipment, and avoided its purchase, if at all possible, to avoid debt and dependency.<sup>369</sup> Curti, however, found that among new farm operators in Trempealeau County in 1870, immigrants tended to have more valuable implements than the native-born.<sup>370</sup> Cogswell also found evidence strongly suggesting that immigrant farmers were just as likely as the native-born to purchase agricultural machinery.<sup>371</sup> Bogue's data from the 1880 census showed that the native-born had slightly more equipment in one Iowa county while the foreign-born had slightly more in another.<sup>372</sup>

Seddie Cogswell's book on tenancy in nineteenth-century Iowa places a great deal of emphasis on investigating differences between the native-born and immigrants. However, this work also distinguishes between native-born Americans from different parts of the country, rather conclusively showing that those from further away (especially New England and the Seaboard South), tended to have more experience and capital

---

<sup>367</sup> Cogswell, *Tenure, Nativity and Age*, 134.

<sup>368</sup> McQuillan, *Prevailing over Time*, 102-107.

<sup>369</sup> Handlin, *The Uprooted*, 85-88.

<sup>370</sup> Curti, *Making of an American Community*, 194.

<sup>371</sup> Cogswell, *Tenure, Nativity and Age*, 119-120.

<sup>372</sup> Bogue, *From Prairie to Corn Belt*, 211.

(accumulated after a series of short- to medium-distance moves) and therefore tended to have the largest and most successful farms. Thus Cogswell demonstrated that factors such as age, experience, capital investment, and migration patterns affected wealth and production on the nineteenth-century farm. Cogswell found no systematic relationship between ethnicity and tenancy; on the early frontier the native-born were more likely to be tenants, but this changed over time. By 1880, more than 30 percent of the foreign-born farm operators in his sample were tenants.<sup>373</sup>

In sum, the evidence accumulated through a variety of works on Midwestern agriculture has not tended to lend support to the idea of a sharp differentiation between the bourgeois American farmer and the backward European peasant. As Robert Ostergren wrote in his innovative study of Swedish settlers in rural Minnesota: “[s]imply put, American conditions and American agricultural practices were different and it was best to adapt as quickly as possible if one hoped to make good.”<sup>374</sup> Ostergren did not, however, claim that this adaptation was immediate or complete, he sought instead to establish a minimum of “transplantation” of agricultural practice. Unfortunately, his arguments for claiming continuity with an Old World past were drawn from a weak evidentiary base. For example, in 1868 five acres of barley were planted in Isanti County, and it is “quite possible” that this was planted by immigrant farmers from Rättvik (where barley was the principal grain crop) or somewhere else in Upper Dalarna. It is obvious that five acres in an entire county under no circumstance constitutes “a fairly substantial amount.” Not

---

<sup>373</sup> Cogswell, *Tenure, Nativity and Age*, Table 2.3, 29.

<sup>374</sup> Robert C. Ostergren, *A Community Transplanted. The Trans-Atlantic Experience of a Swedish Immigrant Settlement in the Upper Middle West, 1835 – 1915* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), 192.

surprisingly, the main crops reported in the 1870 census were wheat, corn, and oats, none of which were important in the Swedes' home area.<sup>375</sup>

Ostergren also made an effort to examine the differences in agricultural practices not only between Swedes, Germans, and old-stock Americans, but also, interestingly, between Swedes from different regions in the home country. However, this analysis is plagued by one of the persistent problems in the literature: the tendency to make inferences from statistical data on a very small number of farmers (there were, for example, only 15 Germans in his sample). Another problem is Ostergren's attempt to explain crop mix, specifically reliance on wheat, with reference to national origin, although the difference in wheat growing between immigrants from two neighboring parishes in the same province in Sweden was larger than any difference between groups of different ethnicity. These data could in fact be used to make a very strong case that other factors than Old World origins must have been much more important in crop choice.<sup>376</sup>

Most distressingly of all, Ostergren used such statistics to argue that Americans (who planted a smaller percentage of their land in wheat) were characterized by a "desire to maximize return," as opposed to the "limited return" accepted by the "transplanted peasant."<sup>377</sup> This amounts to pushing the "transplantation" case well beyond what is justified by the evidence. To use the Rättvik immigrants as an example, they on average planted 8.6 acres in wheat in 1879, compared to the "Old Americans" in Isanti County

---

<sup>375</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid., 197-200.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid., 200.

who planted 8.5 acres.<sup>378</sup> That this constituted 47.8 and 35.1 percent of tilled land, respectively, for the two groups, does not in any way substantiate a claim of differences in mentality or market-orientation. On the contrary, it could much more convincingly be used to argue the opposite, to wit, a tendency towards convergence tempered only by factors such as capital resources, time of settlement, and experience. Furthermore, Ostergren postulated that immigrants from Småland, having been in the Midwest longer than the Rättvik group, should be more likely to resemble American farmers.<sup>379</sup> However, the former group relied more on wheat than the latter, thus contradicting the author's own argument.<sup>380</sup>

Ostergren also posited a "Swedish aversion to hog raising" while talking about settlers in Minnesota.<sup>381</sup> However, the data (if not the text) show that Swedes who settled in South Dakota owned a substantial number of swine.<sup>382</sup> A lengthy discussion of ethnic continuities on the basis of farmers owning one rather than two pigs – in a frontier area dependent largely on wheat-cultivation – does not make sense as a serious analysis of agricultural practice.

Ostergren's *A Community Transplanted* and Jon Gjerde's *From Peasants to Farmers* are generally considered the two most sophisticated accounts of transplantation of Europeans to rural America.<sup>383</sup> It is, therefore, unfortunate that both works exhibit some confusion with regard to the treatment of agricultural statistics. Like Ostergren,

---

<sup>378</sup> These figures are found by multiplying the figures in *ibid.*, Table 5.1, 201, for average acres tilled and average percent of acreage in wheat.

<sup>379</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

<sup>380</sup> *Ibid.*, Table 5.1, 201.

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.*, Table 5.5., p. 208. Here again the number of observations is perilously small, N = 17.

<sup>383</sup> Jon Gjerde, *From Peasants to Farmers. The Migration from Balestrand, Norway, to the Upper Middle West*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

Gjerde admitted that immigrants (in his case, Norwegians from Balestrand) had to adapt to the Midwestern environment, yet he, too, insisted that a certain amount of continuity can be read out of the agricultural census. Gjerde consistently underestimated the importance of wheat in various communities by measuring it in a percentage of “total bushelage” of wheat, corn, barley, oats, and potatoes, a very problematic variable that does not take into account the varying yields (or prices) of the various crops. Thus he in one instance erroneously described barley and oats as the “most significant” crops among Norwegians in Vienna township (in Dane County, Wisconsin) in 1849.<sup>384</sup>

In general, several of the works already mentioned, particularly *A Community Transplanted* and *From Peasants to Farmers*, probably the most influential in this field, have tended to investigate production variables without regard for the age or tenure of the farmer, the size of the household, the size of the farm and value of the land, the use of machinery, the availability of credit, and other relevant factors. When nativity thus becomes the only examined explanatory variable, it can be used to explain any variation with the construction of *ad hoc* hypotheses. If immigrants produce little wheat, it is because they – as immigrants – prefer to cultivate more familiar grains; if they produce very large amounts of wheat, it is because they – as immigrants – are unable to fully understand market developments or because they, as immigrants, are peasant-like and care little about maximizing profits. As long as no other explanations are considered, there will always be enough variation in a given sample that can be interpreted one way

---

<sup>384</sup> Ibid., 176. This assertion is completely inexplicable – Norwegians on average produced 24.2 bushels of barley and 168.6 bushels of wheat.

or the other as “transplantation,” and if it changes back and forth over time it can be credited to “cultural rebound.”

The difficulty of finding an approach that can be applied to a variety of groups and take numerous factors into account should, however, not be underestimated. Perhaps the most sophisticated attempt to date is McQuillan’s attempt to trace the farming strategies of three ethnic groups over a period of fifty years.<sup>385</sup> McQuillan selected Swedish, French Canadian, and German-Russian Mennonite settlements in central Kansas, choosing for each group a homogeneous or “segregated” settlement and a heterogeneous settlement with an “American” control group. He then created an elaborate model for measuring farm income variability and risk, taking into account variations in both climatic conditions and prices. However, due to the difficulty of specifying the ultimate combination of risk and profit-maximization at any one time, McQuillan never truly succeeded in determining “the degree to which immigrants adopted a profit-maximizing strategy.”<sup>386</sup> The author’s pursuit of ethnic change and “Americanization” in a sense generated more facts than the interpretive framework was equipped to handle. The most outstanding fact ended up being the great similarity, for the entire period, between the nonsegregated ethnic farmers and their old-stock neighbors.<sup>387</sup> In a pluralistic setting, it cannot even be determined whether this amounts to “Americanization” or ecological adjustment. As McQuillan suggested, immigrants may

---

<sup>385</sup> McQuillan, *Prevailing over Time*, 159-189.

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid.*, see Table 24, 187.



have been as successful in adaptation and as influential in the creation of regional culture as the native-born.<sup>388</sup>

*Prevailing over Time* struggles with an excess of empirical findings not easily assimilated into any explanatory framework, while at the other extreme, Gjerde's *Minds of the West* makes extravagant claims about ethnic similarities and differences without appropriately considering the many empirical studies that have rejected the American – European dichotomy. Since Gjerde both explicitly and implicitly linked differences in mentalities to differences in behavior, an absence of behavioral variation suggests that the idea of two “types” of “minds” in the Midwest must be reconsidered as well. Based on the works examined so far, it appears that only very limited claims can be made about differences between immigrant and native farmers. Immigrants may have tended to (at least temporarily) avoid some crops, like tobacco; and showed a preference for others, like barley and rye (depending on their origins in the Old World). However, there is little or no evidence that immigrant and native farmers were fundamentally different in their choice of crops or their market-orientation. Nor is there much evidence to suggest consistent differences in tenancy rates, the use of technology, or social mobility. The claims that have been made for the “transplantation” of agricultural practices seem based on unconvincing evidence, and even if they were correct, it is questionable whether they would have any substantial effect on economic outcomes and socio-cultural development.

Ultimately, the similarities between immigrants and the native-born raise the question of whether most immigrants to rural America were in fact less peasant-like to begin with than what is commonly assumed. As Cogswell pointed out, there were barriers

---

<sup>388</sup> Ibid., 200-201.

to frontier settlement which made it unlikely that the poverty-stricken immigrant would settle there.<sup>389</sup> The frontier thus did not constitute a safety valve for the wretched poor, rather it opened up opportunities to people with a minimum of financial and personal resources. It is also misleading to think that nineteenth-century immigrants generally arrived as medieval peasants unfamiliar with markets and a money economy. As John Bodnar has described in some detail, the impulse to emigrate was closely tied to the spread of commercial agriculture in Europe – the immigrant was already acquainted with capitalism.<sup>390</sup> This is also glaringly obvious in the endless ruminations on prices, costs, and profits in immigrant letters.

Despite evidence to the contrary, many historians have continued to believe that there were very significant differences between the native American and the European immigrant with regard to agricultural practices. The evidence presented in the studies by Curti, Bogue, and Cogswell have countered these claims about large differences between native and immigrant farmers. However, these works are all more than a generation old and, what's worse, considered Turnerian because of their emphasis on the effects of the frontier environment. Thus present interpretation of the role of ethnicity in Midwestern agriculture depends heavily on the works of the "transplantation" school, by scholars such as Gjerde, Ostergren, and Kamphoefner.<sup>391</sup> The transplantationists, who have not employed advanced statistical techniques, have often admitted the general fact that agricultural statistics offer little reason to believe that national origin was a crucial factor

---

<sup>389</sup> Cogswell, *Tenure, Nativity and Age*, 154-155.

<sup>390</sup> For the European capitalist context of transatlantic migration, see Bodnar, *The Transplanted*, 1-56.

<sup>391</sup> Gjerde, *Minds of the West*; idem, *From Peasants to Farmers*. Ostergren, *A Community Transplanted*; Kamphoefner, *The Westfalians*.

in farming, while stretching the data in sometimes misleading ways to rescue a semblance of “transplanted” practice.

There are a variety of complications related to the sources and methods of researching immigrant agriculture. Notwithstanding the contributions to this topic made by scholars using census materials, it should be mentioned that the census, too, has its limitations. Robert Swierenga has pointed out that the census lists individuals according to national origin, whereas it in many cases would be more useful to know more specific information about local and regional origins.<sup>392</sup> There are also problems related to the application of statistical methods to census data. Census data are often flawed, approximate, or outright inaccurate. A perhaps even greater problem is the inverse relationship between sample size and the possibility of “environmental control,” that is, the declining validity of the assumption that a variety of variables related to ecology, microclimate, soil quality, market access and other environmental, economic, and historical factors do not vary as the area studied is enlarged to acquire a larger sample from which to make generalizations. If such factors can not be assumed to remain relatively constant across the sample, comparisons and averages become less meaningful. On the other hand, if the area studied is reduced, the sample is reduced as well, and the possibility of making meaningful statements about subsamples (different ethnic groups) often declines correspondingly.

This chapter argues that much of what has been written about immigrant agriculture, especially on the basis of quantitative evidence, lacks the methodological rigor necessary to be of any great value to those who seek to understand the question at

---

<sup>392</sup> Swierenga, “Ethnicity and American Agriculture,” 338.

hand. Many scholars have made use of agricultural census data cross-referenced with population census data to examine the relationship between national origin and farm practices, an approach adopted in this chapter as well. Yet, their conclusions were commonly based exclusively on the comparison of means, for example, the mean value of agricultural equipment on farms with operators belonging to group A compared to the mean value of agricultural equipment on farms with operators belonging to group B. A simple comparison of means, however, does not in any meaningful way establish systematic variation across groups if there is extensive in-group variation. When there is great dispersion and skewed distributions of data, drawing historical conclusions on the basis of small differences between means is inappropriate. Thus, the strategy adopted in this paper is to make use of a variety of statistical measures and procedures to reach more reliable conclusions about the relationship between national origin and agricultural practice.

The data examined in the following case study were collected from the 1880 agricultural and population censuses and covers two townships in Hamilton County, Iowa. Located near the center of the state, the main productive activities on Hamilton County's farms were similar to those of most other Iowa farms of the time. Most farmers grew corn, wheat, and oats, and they usually owned dairy cows, beef cattle, and hogs. By 1880, Hamilton County had passed through the frontier stage, and land had become relatively expensive. Partially for this reason, almost 30 percent of the county's farms were operated by tenants who paid rent in cash or as a share of the crop (the latter was more common).

The two townships selected for this study were Cass, in the northwestern part of the county, and Scott, in the southeast. The townships were equal in size, but Scott Township had a larger number of farms. Cass Township had a majority of native-stock Americans, while most of Scott Township's farmers were Norwegian.

Variable	Cass Township			Scott Township		
	Mean	Median	St.dev.	Mean	Median	St. dev.
Imp. land	86	70	56	98	80	81
Unimp. land	39	27	40	9	0	41
Total land	125	93	79	107	80	88
Land value	2546	1970	1907	2128	1600	1764
Livest. value	789	553	789	541	413	476
Equipment	134	100	138	148	150	121
Total capital	3468	2683	2582	2732	2075	1980
Corn, acres	35.4	30.0	24.3	31.3	30.0	26.5
Corn, prod.	1509	1400	1045	1133	1000	1016
Wheat, acres	20.0	15.5	20.5	8.7	6.0	11.3
Wheat, prod.	263	200	300	99	70	128
Oats, acres	10.0	6.0	9.0	4.9	5.0	5.2
Oats, prod.	388	322	347	180	160	180
Dairy cows	5.7	4.0	5.5	5.2	5.0	3.7
Other cattle	17.6	7.0	25.7	5.2	2.0	7.8
Total cattle	23.3	11.0	28.1	10.3	8.0	10.5
Swine	28.8	205	30.7	17.5	10.0	21.1
Wages paid	43	0	96	52	30	66
Total prod.	630	560	386	503	450	353
Household	4.9	5.0	2.2	4.5	4.0	2.4

Table 1. *Descriptive agricultural statistics for Cass and Scott townships. Units of measurement are acres (land), dollars (value of land, livestock, equipment, and production), and bushels (grain production). 116 cases in Cass Township and 147 cases in Scott Township.*

Table 1 provides basic data on agriculture in the two townships. The very large standard deviations indicate that the distribution of data observations do not conform to

the ideal of a normal distribution. In a normal distribution, most observations are close to the mean, thus enabling the observer to speak of “typical” cases – after all, most cases fall within a well known and limited range. However, when data are not normally distributed, speaking of “typical” farms as scholars are apt to do makes little sense. Figure 1, showing the distribution of capital (land, livestock, and implements) on Scott Township farms, demonstrates this concept in graphic terms. The bell-shaped curve indicates what a normal distribution would look like. However, the distribution is obviously positively skewed, meaning that the median and most of the cases are well below the arithmetic mean (which is in turn inflated by the few big farms toward the right of the figure.) Close examination of Table 1 shows that this is the case for virtually every variable under study.

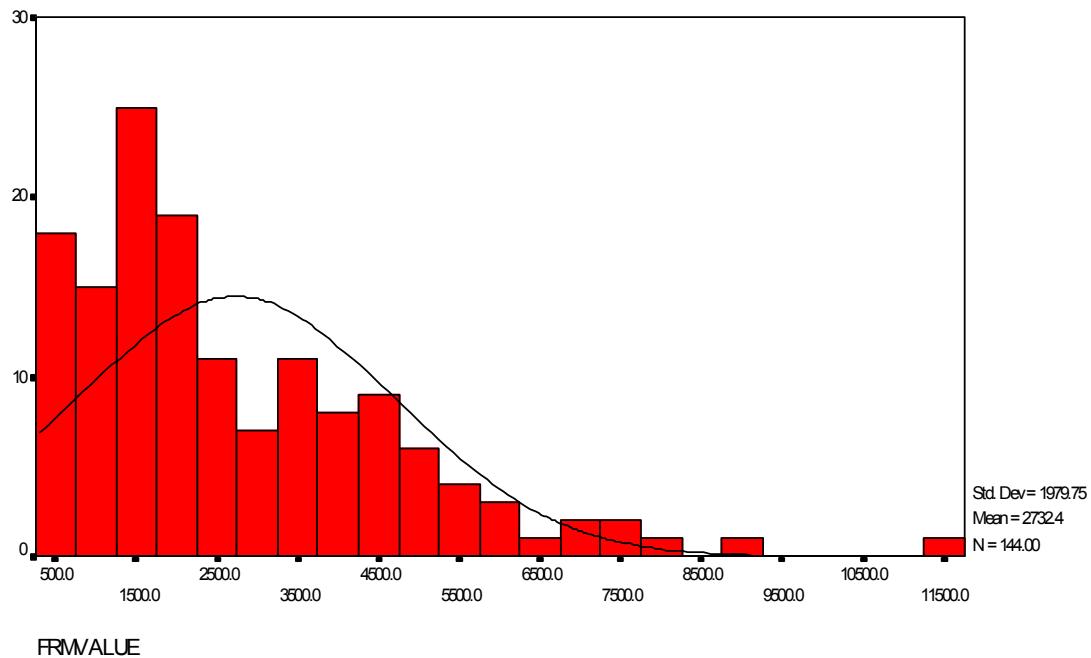


Figure 1. *Total capital in Scott Township farms, in \$.*

To fully understand the ramifications of the high levels of variation in the data, consider the following. Let us say that a historian extracts from the Cass Township sample a subset, 25 % of the total cases, of farmers belonging to ethnic group X. It is observed that whereas the average farmer in that township had 17.6 beef cattle, group X-farmers had only 10.8. On the other hand, X-ians grew over 10 percent more wheat than the average farmer, and almost 15 percent more corn. This, however, was not especially surprising, since their farms contained 12 percent more improved land. Yet their advantage in land ownership did not result in correspondingly higher levels of reported value of production.

Following in the footsteps of renowned historians, the scholar in question might construct a number of ad hoc hypotheses on the basis of these data. The especially conspicuous dearth of non-dairy cattle might indicate a specific set of cultural preferences, and it might be argued that it was the shortfall of cattle and thus of natural fertilizer that hampered the productivity of X-ian farms (however, X-ians also had smaller households and paid less in wages, suggesting that conceptions of family and imperfect market integration might be to blame). The emphasis on raising corn might be seen as a product of adaptation or maladaptation to short-term fluctuations in price structures, to which group X may or may not have been more attuned than other groups, etc., etc.

However, group X in this case is not a real ethnic group. Instead, it was constructed by a computer drawing a completely random sample of farms. Nevertheless, considered as a “group” and in terms of the means on various variables, these farmers

seemed to have exhibited unique collective traits that differentiated them from other Cass Township farmers. It is this statistical phenomenon that has been completely ignored by many historians studying the relationship between ethnicity and agriculture: when selecting two or more subgroups from a larger population and comparing the means of those subgroups, one must necessarily expect some random variation between means if the actual variation on the various variables is large and non-normally distributed. Scholars should thus show great care not to interpret small differences between means as indicative of larger cultural patterns, especially not without analyzing intragroup variation.

Figure 2 further illustrates this point. It shows, on the left side, the number of swine on each farm operated by a native-stock American, and, on the right, the number of swine on each farm operated by an immigrant. On average (in terms of means), each native-stock American had 29.7 swine and each immigrant farmer had 34.9 swine. However, as the figure clearly shows, this claim about “average” farmers in fact tells us very little about differences between Yankee and immigrant swine-ownership. The entire difference is made up by the massive herds of two farmers, the German G. A. Meissner and the Englishman John N. Garth, who together owned more than one-third of all the swine on immigrant farms.



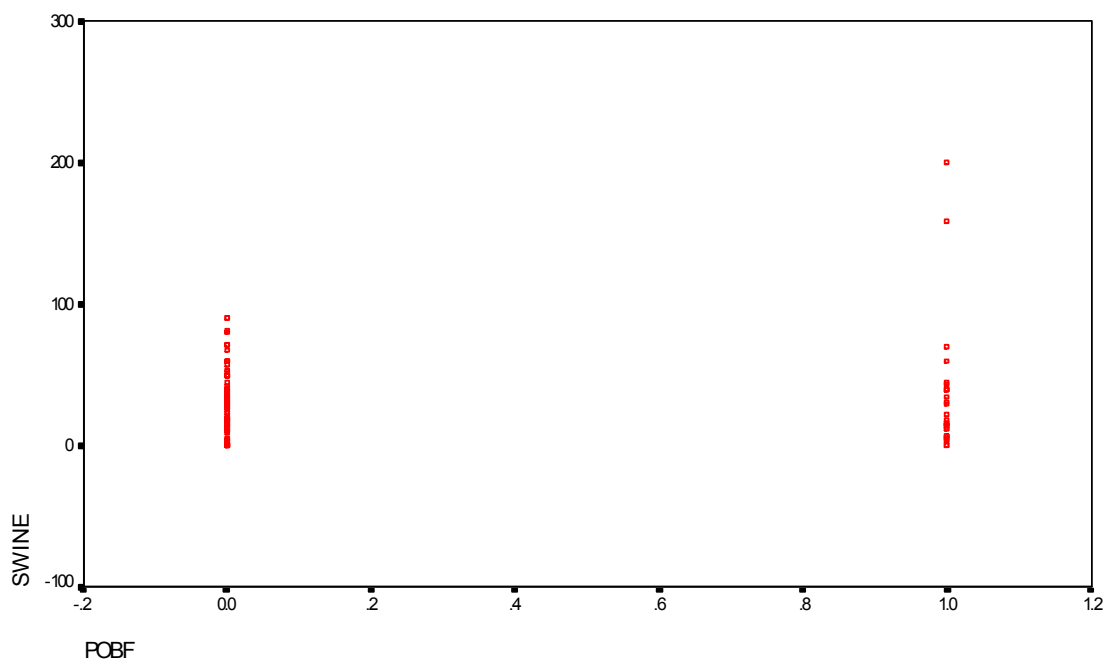


Figure 2. *Ownership of swine on Cass Township farms, 1880, by father's place of birth (0 = United States, 1 = other).*

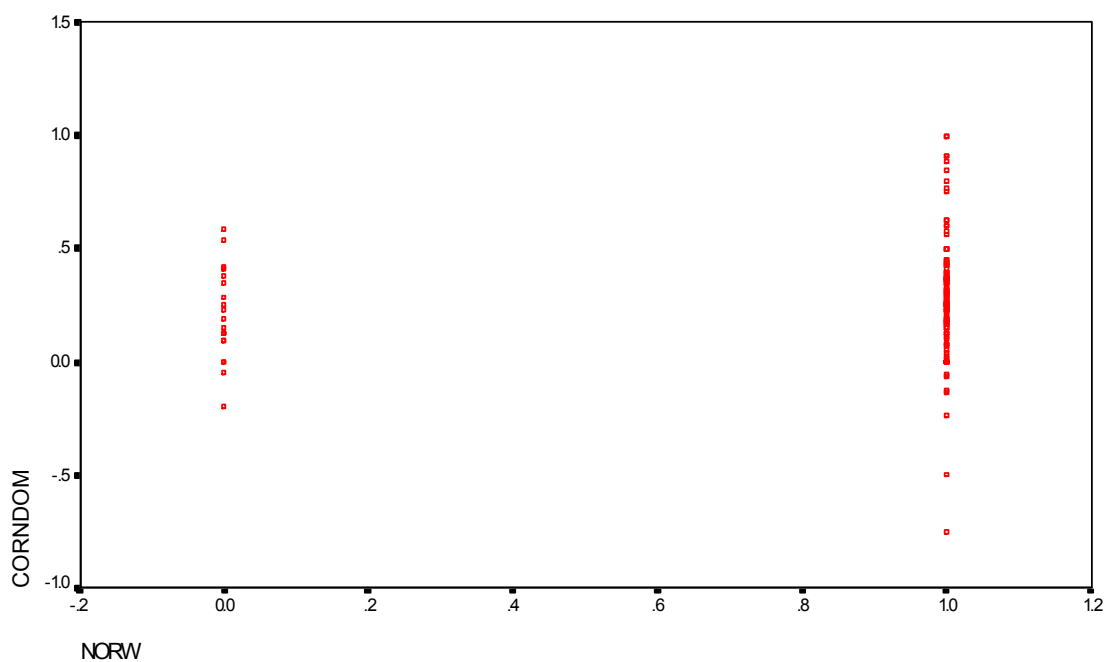


Figure 3. *Crop preference on Scott Township farms, 1880, by national origin (1 = Norwegian, 0 = other).*

Figure 3 compares the crop preferences of Norwegians and non-Norwegians in Scott Township. The variable employed here will be explained in detail below; in brief, a positive number suggests a preference for corn, a negative number a preference for wheat. Knowing that the mean was .27 for Norwegians and .19 for non-Norwegians is not especially enlightening, seeing from the scatter plot that most farmers in both groups clustered between 0 and 0.5, indicating a general similarity of farm strategy, is more helpful. To say simply that Norwegians showed a greater preference for corn might certainly be considered misleading, yet historians have in the past frequently attributed great significance to similar small differences between means. Summarizing any set of data in terms of an arithmetic mean involves a simplification, a necessary limitation of information. However, the meaningfulness of means and other measures of central tendency is highly sensitive to the distribution (variability) in the data, as should now be clear.

In order to get more reliable quantitative measures of the relationship between national origin and farming practices I decided to use means and standard deviations to calculate correlations between national origin and each variable examined, and then also to calculate the statistical significance, i. e., the probability that a seeming correspondence between two variables would occur randomly. Table 2 gives an overview of the figures for native-stock and foreign-stock farmers in Cass Township ("foreign stock" defined here as someone whose father was born outside the United States).

Variable	Mean, n.s.	St. dev.	Mean, f.s.	St. dev.	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Imp. land	88	54	86	67	-.01	.93
Unimp. land	36	32	54	59	.19	.05
Total land	124	70	140	107	.09	.37
Land value	2690	2008	2460	1837	-.05	.61
Livest. value	838	760	907	848	.04	.70
Equipment	151	145	125	94	-.08	.40
Total capital	3677	2632	3491	2608	-.03	.76
Corn, acres	37.9	23.1	31.6	25.7	-.11	.25
Corn, prod.	1633	1014	1285	999	-.15	.13
Wheat, acres	16.8	15.1	25.4	26.8	.20	.05
Wheat, prod.	221	225	342	422	.18	.06
Oats, acres	10.5	8.4	9.4	9.9	-.05	.58
Oats, prod.	408	321	364	389	-.06	.56
Dairy cows	6.1	5.9	5.5	3.2	-.05	.65
Other cattle	17.5	21.4	19.7	36.4	.04	.71
Total cattle	22.6	23.9	25.6	37.2	.05	.64
Swine	29.7	24.1	34.9	46.7	.07	.47
Wages paid	51	93	39	123	-.05	.62
Total prod.	634	343	640	509	.01	.95
Household	4.7	2.2	5.5	2.0	.17	.09

Table 2. *Agricultural statistics for Cass Township, 1880, by national origin, with correlation coefficients (Pearson's *r*) and *p*-values for significance tests.*

Table 2 shows that the differences in means between native-stock and foreign-stock farmers were generally quite small relative to their standard deviations; thus the correlations between national origin and the various farming variables were weak as well. Even at the higher end, a correlation of .20 means that only 4 percent (*r* squared) of the variation in one variable can be accounted for by the variation in the other. The only areas where correlations are high enough and *p*-values low enough to take notice are wheat cultivation (differences in wheat production following, of course, from the differences in acreage devoted to that crop) and amounts of unimproved land. In the case of wheat cultivation, some of the difference is clearly attributable to two outliers in a

relatively small sample of foreign-stock farmers ( $N = 26$ ). Once again we find the immigrant from Hamburg, G. A. Meissner, in the upper right hand corner; the other outlier being Thomas Pringle, of English stock.

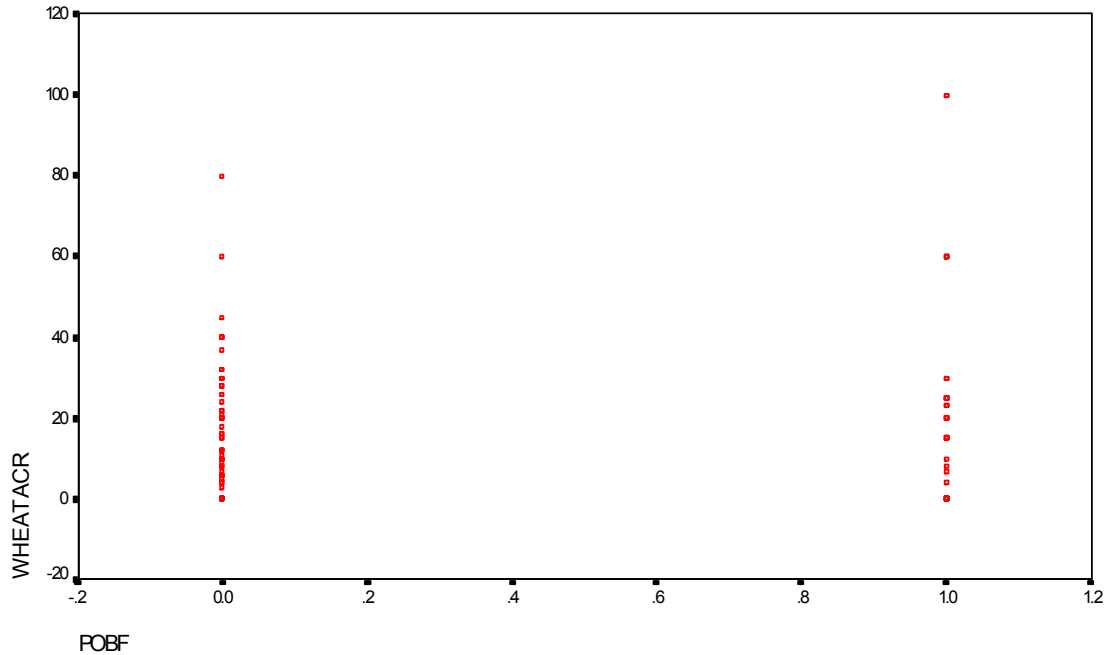


Figure 4. *Wheat acreages on Cass Township farms, by father's place of birth (0 = United States, 1 = other).*

The only other exception to the general rule of similarity was the larger holdings of unimproved land on farms run by foreign-stock operators. As seen in Figure 5, this was also to a considerable extent a product of a small number of extreme cases. Of those four foreign-stock farmers whose farms contained large unimproved areas, only the aforementioned Meissner was an owner-operator, the other three being tenants. In fact, 50 percent of the foreign-stock farmers in Cass Township were tenants, in stark contrast to the common notion that immigrants longed for permanent ties to the land and priced

landownership above all else. It is tempting to conclude that the borderline-significant relationships between national origin and wheat cultivation/unimproved land are products primarily of the skewed distributions on the latter two variables. Correlation analysis assumes normal distribution of the examined variables, and skewness should generally be between -1 and 1 to approach fulfillment of this criterion. In this dataset, skewness was 2.0 for wheat acreage and 1.9 for unimproved land.

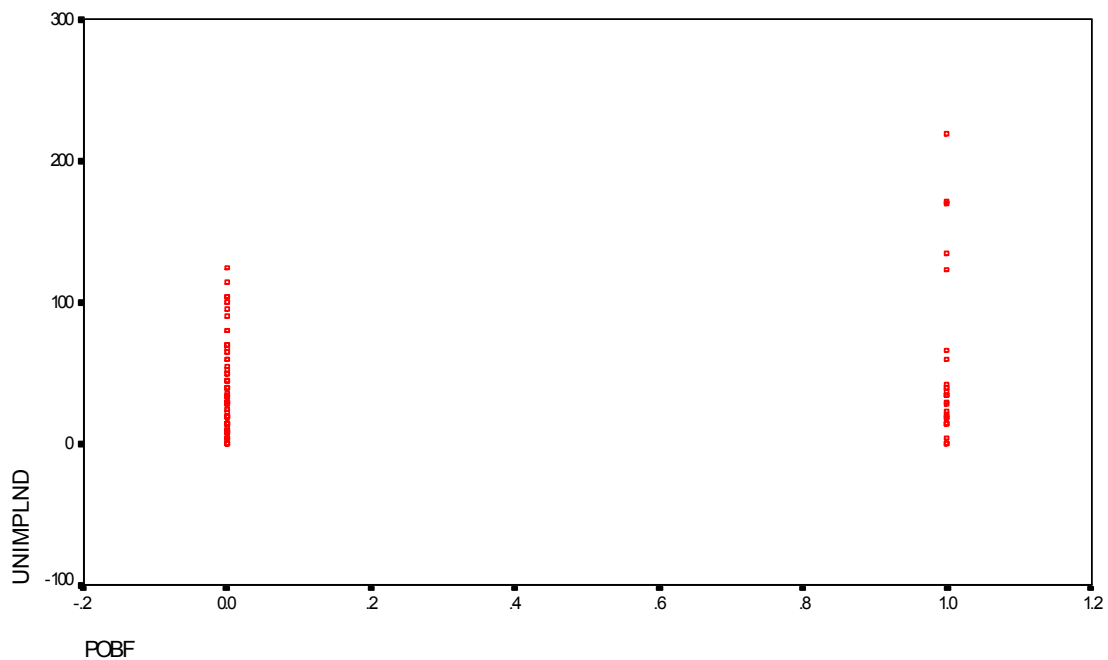


Figure 5. *Unimproved land, Cass Township, by place of father's birth (0= United States, 1 = other).*

It seems far more instructive, though, to focus on all the variables where no significant correlation was found. In terms of farm size, livestock holdings, the use of equipment, total capitalization, planting of corn and oats, wages paid, and total production, only negligible differences were found between the two groups. Furthermore,

calculated average yields were strikingly similar: for corn, 43.2 bushels per acre for native-stock farmers and 40.6 bushels per acre for foreign-stock farmers; for oats, 38.9 and 38.7 bushels per acre, respectively; and for wheat, 13.2 and 13.5 bushels per acre, respectively. This minimal variation must be considered to be well within the margin of measurement error, as at least in the case of corn and oats (only some of which was marketed) production data must be considered rough estimates.

Taking further steps to analyze differences in farm strategy, I developed variables designed to measure crop preference (corn v. wheat), cattle preference (dairy v. beef cattle), and livestock preference (cattle v. swine). The formulas for these variables are:

Crop preference = (corn acreage – wheat acreage)/total acres of improved land

Cattle preference = (beef cattle – dairy cows)/total heads of cattle

Livestock preference = (swine – cattle)/ (swine + cattle)

Variable	Mean, n.s.	St.dev.	Mean, f.s.	St.dev.	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Crop preference	.33	.74	.11	.33	-.14	.17
Cattle preference	.25	.50	.26	.33	.01	.92
Livestock preference	.11	.47	.09	.44	-.02	.84

Table 3. *Farm strategies of native-stock and foreign-stock farmers in Cass Township.*

Once again, it is clear that the differences between means were minuscule in relation to the extensive variation within groups. Correlations between national origin and these measures of farm strategy and choice were weak and insignificant. Similarly, a general measure of productivity (production/total capital) showed no relationship with

national origin ( $r = -.07$ ,  $p = .45$ ). It actually proved exceptionally difficult to find any census variable that would account for variation in productivity, suggesting either that the measure itself is flawed or that short-term productivity in fact depended primarily on variables not reported in the census (e. g., the farmer's skill and experience, proximity to marketing institutions, availability of credit, weather, livestock and plant disease, etc.).

If we focus instead on production alone, or, to be precise, the reported value thereof, we find that it is possible to construct a simple regression model which will account for most of the observed variation:

$$\text{PROD} = 48.1 + 5.1 (\text{IMPRLND}) + 40.3 (\text{HH10})$$

R2 adj = .65

Sig F = .00

IMPRLND	beta	.75	sig t	.00
HH10	beta	.18	sig t	.00

Production levels in Cass Township largely depended on the amount of improved land available and the number of household members over the age of ten (the former variable being by far the most important). Including national origin (place of father's birth) as a variable in the model did not increase explained variance and it was not found to be statistically significant when controlling for the other variables. Overall, ethnicity seems to have had very limited effects on farm operations in Cass Township.

The population in Cass Township was mostly old-stock American, with a minority of farmers with origins in Austria, Canada, England, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Scotland, Switzerland, and Wales. Scott Township, by contrast, was

predominantly Norwegian, with some native-stock farmers and other immigrants from Canada, Denmark, England, Finland, Germany, and Scotland. This composition of population makes it possible to isolate one group of foreign-stock farmers, the Norwegians, and compare them with the other farmers in the township.

<b>Variable</b>	Mean, Nor.	St. dev.	Mean, other	St. dev.	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Imp. land	96	73	113	120	-.08	.36
Unimp. land	11	45	0	1	.10	.24
Total land	107	83	113	120	-.02	.77
Land value	2129	1841	2222	1511	-.02	.82
Livest. value	546	437	631	642	-.07	.43
Equipment	148	123	187	104	-.12	.15
Total capital	2742	2059	2910	1690	-.03	.72
Corn, acres	32.7	27.9	26.9	18.5	.08	.34
Corn, prod.	1189	1078	983	706	.07	.38
Wheat, acres	8.4	11.9	9.9	8.6	-.05	.56
Wheat, prod.	95	134	119	111	-.07	.42
Oats, acres	4.6	5.3	6.7	4.8	-.15	.07
Oats, prod.	167	185	250	159	-.17	.05
Dairy cows	5.7	3.7	3.8	2.8	.19	.03
Other cattle	5.8	8.5	2.4	3.0	.16	.06
Total cattle	11.5	11.1	6.2	5.1	.19	.03
Swine	18.4	21.5	16.2	21.3	.04	.65
Wages paid	56	70	41	49	.08	.33
Total prod.	500	382	550	207	-.05	.55
Household	4.6	2.5	3.8	1.6	.13	.13

Table 4. *Agricultural data, Scott Township, by national origin (Norwegian or other), with correlation coefficients (Pearson's *r*) and *p*-values for significance tests.*

As Table 4 shows, the differences between Norwegian and other farmers in Scott Township were small and, for the most part, statistically insignificant. The one exception is the discrepancy in cattle ownership. The distribution of beef cattle was extremely



skewed (skewness = 2.7), and about one third of Norwegian farmers did not own any at all, while some had large herds. The statistical relationship here is thus tenuous at best. The distribution of dairy cows, on the other hand, was far closer to a normal distribution (skewness = .5), and most Norwegian farmers had between four and seven milch cows while most non-Norwegians had fewer than four. However, the Norwegian mean of 5.7 dairy cows was very close to the county average of 5.5 dairy cows, so it seems that it is the lower level among non-Norwegians that needs to be explained. It could be an artifact of the relatively small sample of non-Norwegian farmers, or related to the fact that those farmers had relatively small families. It is also in the nature of this kind of inquiry that if one correlates twenty pairs of variables, one is by mathematical definition likely to come up with one that passes the significance test at the .05 level (even if the variables are entirely unrelated). As the figures in Table 5 indicate, no significant differences were found between the livestock preferences of Norwegians and non-Norwegians.

Variable	Mean, No.	St. dev.	Mean, other	St. dev.	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Crop preference	.27	.27	.19	.19	.11	.19
Cattle preference	-.26	.51	-.45	.54	.14	.11
Livestock preference	.00	.57	.08	.69	-.05	.57

Table 5. *Farm strategies of Norwegian and non-Norwegian farmers in Scott Township.*

As in Cass Township, the most outstanding finding is that ethnicity played a very minor role. Differences in farm size, corn and wheat production, equipment, and hired labor were small and insignificant. Grain yields were virtually the same across the board,

e. g., Norwegians reported corn yields averaging 36.4 bushels per acre, compared to 36.5 bushels per acre for the non-Norwegian minority.

The regression model for production levels was somewhat different for Scott Township. The equation looks like this:

$$\text{PROD} = 73.1 + 2.8 (\text{IMRLND}) + 1.1 (\text{EQUIP})$$

R<sup>2</sup> adj = .68

Sig F = .00

IMRLND	beta	.53	sig t	.00
EQUIP	beta	.39	sig t	.00

We find that household size has been replaced with value of equipment in the Scott Township case, although the amount of improved land remained the most crucial determinant of production. Many, if not most, scholars assume that the native-born were early adapters of technology while backward immigrants relied heavily on family labor. The data presented here show that farmers in Yankee-dominated Cass Township relied more on household labor and less on technology than farmers in Norwegian-dominated Scott Township. Even though individual-level data do not support explaining this difference in ethnic terms, it must be considered strong evidence against the orthodox position. Factors other than ethnicity, most especially corn acreage, decided how much equipment each farmer had at his (or in rare cases, her) disposal. Similarly, farmer's propensity to hire outside labor depended on the size of the household, the amounts of corn and wheat to be harvested, and the number of cattle and swine to be cared for, not on the ethnicity of the farm operator.

The evidence analyzed in this chapter indeed suggests that the influence of ethnic background on every major aspect of farming and farm economy was small or non-existent. It should certainly be clear at this point that the crude dichotomy pitting bourgeois-capitalist Yankees against peasant-traditionalist immigrants needs serious revision, and it might be most appropriate to abandon it altogether. The purpose of this chapter has been to examine the relationship between national origin and agricultural practice with more sophisticated statistical tools than have been used in previous research, and the striking difficulty of finding any strong correlation between national origin and any major farming variable indicates that much of what has been presented as quantitative difference in previous research has in fact been the result of the application of inappropriate and inadequate methodologies.

## **5: IMMIGRANTS AND POLITICAL REPRESENTATION: A CASE STUDY**

A system of representative government based on elections entails a selection process that declares some people more suited for office than others. Who these representatives are, their social characteristics as well as their political views, thus tells us something about what representation actually means to those involved in the political process. This chapter is aimed at furthering our understanding of the role of ethnicity in defining political representativeness in the “immigrant state” of Minnesota.

Although the topic of “immigrants and politics” is a familiar one in American historiography, much less has been done in the field of immigrants and political representation. In this chapter, I make a modest attempt to improve the situation by considering a limited case, political representation in Minnesota between 1890 and 1920. As this case study demonstrates, immigrants were far more than voting cattle. During the time period studied, most of the elected political elite in Minnesota were in fact first- or second-generation immigrants. Yet the study of who those immigrant politicians were also offers some insight into enduring ethnic inequalities in an immigrant state.

Given the relatively unusual topic, it is useful to bring up some theoretical points before considering the specifics of the Minnesota case. Representative government is not in any literal sense a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Instead, some people govern while others are governed, and the relationship between the two groups is mediated by the concept of representation. The concept of representation is abstract and paradoxical; it means to make something present in some figurative sense without being present in a literal sense. Basing a system of government on such a vague principle necessarily invites vigorous debate over the true meaning of the term. In the

past, most scholars interested in the concept of representation have distinguished between “standing for” and “acting for” constituents, between being “representative” in the sense of resemblance or shared socio-demographic characteristics and being “a representative,” that is, an intermediary through which voters “act” and thus become responsible for the actions of government.<sup>393</sup> The term representativeness (or descriptive representation) is used to denote the first of these two meanings of representation.

Without denying that representativeness is one aspect of representation, most contemporary philosophers and political scientists have tended to de-emphasize the social characteristics of representatives in their treatment of the concept. First of all, they tend to argue that such characteristics are less important than the values, beliefs, opinions, and policy preferences of representatives. Thus one student of representation concluded that “representativeness of view, rather than some kind of resemblance, is what should matter to those who wish to see councils more representative.”<sup>394</sup> Secondly, they argue that the correspondence between social characteristics, on one hand, and values, beliefs, opinions, and policy preferences, on the other, may be weak or non-existent.<sup>395</sup> Finally, they usually conclude that although representation may not be a purely practical phenomenon, it is primarily a matter of governing and making decisions.

---

<sup>393</sup> The terms “acting for” and “standing for” were introduced by Hanna Pitkin in her seminal *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967). This is the most comprehensive treatise on the subject, along with A. H. Birch, *Representation* (New York: Praeger, 1972). See also *Representation*, ed. Pitkin (New York: Atherton Press, 1969). For the historical trajectory of the concept of representation, see Bernard Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997). The specific distinction between “representative” and “a representative” was drawn by B. J. Diggs, “Practical Representation,” in, *Representation*, ed. J. R. Pennock & J. W. Chapman (New York: Atherton Press, 1968). See also *Representation and Community in Western Democracies*, ed. Nirmala Rao (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), and *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*, ed. Adam Przeworski et al. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>394</sup> Nirmala Rao, “The Changing Context of Representation,” in idem, *Representation and Community*, 6.

<sup>395</sup> For a rare empirical study on this topic, see Ulrik Kjaer, “Representativeness and Local Politics in Denmark,” in Rao, *Representation and Community*, 24 – 50.

The political scientist Jane Mansbridge has argued that, contrary to the conventional sharp dichotomy between “standing for” and “acting for,” descriptive representation can have a bearing on substantive representation. This followed her attempt to shift the emphasis of representation from traditional democratic accountability to the “quality of deliberative interaction.” Mansbridge conceived of deliberative processes, both vertical (voter – representative) and horizontal (between representatives) as part of the policy-making process rather than as something outside of and largely irrelevant to it. Thus, for a previously subordinate group in society, problems of distrust and faulty communication in the vertically organized deliberative process can be alleviated by the election of a representative from that group. Such a representative, in touch with his or her socio-demographic peers, might be able to articulate new issues, place them on the agenda, and convince out-group representatives of their salience. With increased emphasis on communication and deliberation, the need for representation of all “useful perspectives” becomes paramount.<sup>396</sup>

In addition, Mansbridge suggested that the election of such representatives can have a marked impact on a group’s status and self-understanding, it can “change the social meaning of membership in that group.”<sup>397</sup> It demonstrates capability to outsiders, and increases the legitimacy of the system to the group’s members. The British theorist Anne Phillips has also stressed the importance of inclusion as a good in itself, regardless of its impact on substantive outcomes. To her, under-representation amounts to an “infantilization” of entire groups, who are treated as “political minors.”

---

<sup>396</sup> Jane Mansbridge, “What does a Representative Do? Descriptive Representation in Communicative Settings of Distrust, Uncrystallized Interests, and Historically Denigrated Status,” in *Citizenship in Diverse Societies*, ed. W. Kymlicka & W. Norman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 99 – 103.

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

Representativeness is a matter of recognition, of a politics of presence. At the same time, Phillips highlighted the substantive opportunities for group advocacy and agenda-setting that emerge with representation. Those opportunities tend to be rare when voting constitutes a group's only form of formal participation in government.<sup>398</sup>

Phillips suggested that the socio-demographic composition of representative bodies is intimately connected with their institutional legitimacy as organs of democracy, a lack of representativeness signifying "injustice" or a "democratic deficit."<sup>399</sup> Furthermore, the extent of representativeness speaks to the stratification of society at large, since variations in representation are likely to reflect underlying variations in power and group experience.<sup>400</sup>

It is very difficult to gauge or generalize about immigrants' interest in these matters. When the editor of the *Iowa Staats-Anzeiger* exhorted his readers to bring out "the lame and the sick" to vote for German Democrats, he demonstrated how some intensely politicized and partisan immigrants approached the matter of political representation.<sup>401</sup> On the other hand, the evidence of personal writings suggests that political issues and events only rarely made it into letters, diaries, and autobiographies. The ability to participate in the democratic process through voting was hardly ever seen as one of the major drawing points of American society. Quite on the contrary, most common immigrants who wrote about government issues emphasized freedom from intrusive government action (unreasonable laws and ordinances, taxes, conscription, customs, etc.) rather than the freedom and opportunity to be politically active. Even some

---

<sup>398</sup> Anne Phillips, *The Politics of Presence* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 1 – 45.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>401</sup> *Iowa Staats-Anzeiger*, 26 October, 1906, 1.

politically conscious observers like the poet Sven Hansson saw American party politics with its enthusiasm, “treating,” and occasional mob violence as slightly ridiculous.<sup>402</sup>

Some immigrants cared a great deal about party politics and ethnic representation, others cared very little or not at all.

Those who did discuss politics and the ethnicity of political leaders differed in their views of the matter. Like present-day commentators, first- and second-generation immigrants sometimes debated the relationship between representation and representativeness. The debates and editorials in Scandinavian newspapers in Minnesota before the 1912 elections furnish a telling example.

In September of that year, Minnesotans went to the polls for a state-wide primary election for the first time. The state legislature had passed the new primary law only months earlier, after Governor Adolph Eberhart called for a special session. The Swedish-born governor was otherwise a rather cautious and conservative executive, but he had come under pressure at the Republican state convention in May. By most accounts he called the special session as a last resort to secure his own re-nomination.<sup>403</sup>

As the state primary approached, the Norwegian-language *Minneapolis Tidende* published a “report” which served as a thinly veiled endorsement of the governor. The report outlined the contents of an Eberhart pamphlet detailing the governor’s accomplishments. Echoing Eberhart’s description of progress as a matter of results rather than rhetoric, the piece enumerated the results of the special session and emphasized that

---

<sup>402</sup> Hansson, *Lefnadsteckning på vers og prosa*, 66-67. Hansson even wrote a satirical poem about a 1870 Congressional race in Minnesota.

<sup>403</sup> Carl H. Chrislock, *The Progressive Era in Minnesota*, (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1971), 48-49; William Lass, *Minnesota: A History* (New York: Norton, 1998), 212-213.



it had been “important, yet short and cheap.”<sup>404</sup> This short piece was the *Tidende*’s only endorsement of any candidate prior to the primary. It is, therefore, all the more surprising that Eberhart received no such support from the paper prior to the general election. Instead, the *Tidende* focused on the candidacy of Knute Nelson, Norwegian immigrant and U. S. Senator.<sup>405</sup> The otherwise painstakingly neutral publication portrayed Nelson as a man “admired by the whole country,” a progressive highly regarded by his party yet independent-minded and hard at work for the state and its people.<sup>406</sup>

Explaining why the *Tidende* endorsed Eberhart in the primary, but not in the general election, and Nelson in the general election, but not in the primary, necessarily requires a certain amount of speculation. It is nevertheless conspicuous that Eberhart faced a Scandinavian opponent in the general election, as did Nelson in the primary, while neither of them faced Scandinavian opposition in those elections in which they received *Tidende* backing. In other words, the paper threw its support behind Scandinavian favorites, but only as long as they were not running against other Scandinavians. The *Tidende*’s third and final endorsement of 1912 followed the same pattern: it supported Swedish State Supreme Court Justice Andrew Holt in a race against two non-Scandinavians. Scandinavians should be honored to have a “countryman” like Holt on the Supreme Court, the *Tidende* suggested.<sup>407</sup>

---

<sup>404</sup> *Minneapolis Tidende*, 5 September, 1912, 1.

<sup>405</sup> Officially, U.S. Senators were still elected by state legislatures at this time, but Minnesota had passed legislation which provided for *de facto* popular election. *Minnesota Votes: Election Returns by County for Presidents, Senators, Congressmen, and Governors, 1857 – 1977*, Bruce M. White et al., comp. (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1977), 5.

<sup>406</sup> *Minneapolis Tidende*, 31 October, 1912, 4.

<sup>407</sup> *Minneapolis Tidende*, 31 October, 1912, 4.

Swedish-language *Svenska Amerikanska Posten*, too, endorsed Eberhart's candidacy, and dismissed claims that the governor was insufficiently progressive.<sup>408</sup> The Swedish-run *Chisago County Press*, on the other hand, insisted that ethnic appeals were worthless. Editor M. S. Norelius stated emphatically that the progressives would support whomever they pleased, and that people cared not about parties, but about policies that would "place the state in the vanguard of real, intelligent progress."<sup>409</sup> After the Republican national convention, he criticized Eberhart for his continuing support of President William Howard Taft. Norelius, who had once been Eberhart's classmate at Gustavus Adolphus College, now suggested that former state attorney general Edward Young would be a better choice for governor. Furthermore, he accused Eberhart of being a puppet for Ed Smith (the chairman of the Republican Central Committee in Minnesota) and a tool for "the steel trust, the breweries and the railways."<sup>410</sup>

On 14 August, the Swedish-language *Minnesota Stats Tidning* printed a letter from University of Minnesota Professor A. A. Stomberg, another former classmate of Eberhart and Norelius. Crassly denouncing Eberhart's critics, Stomberg reminded readers of the dangers of "bearing false witness" against a "just, knowledgeable, and honest" man like Eberhart. Undermining such a competent leader with the use of "vague accusations" and "mean-spirited insinuations" must surely be the work of people who were envious of Swedish power, Stomberg thought. He emphasized the special duty Swedes had to support their countryman.<sup>411</sup>

---

<sup>408</sup> *Svenska Amerikanska Posten*, 30 October, 1912, 6.

<sup>409</sup> *Chisago County Press*, 1 February, 1912, 4.

<sup>410</sup> *Chisago County Press*, 22 August, 1912, 4.

<sup>411</sup> *Minneapolis Stats Tidning*, 14 August, 1912, 7.

Norelius was appalled. On 22 August, he switched to his mother tongue in the *Press* and raged against Stomberg's demand that all Swedes support Eberhart because he was Swedish. Was it perhaps not acceptable for a citizen to oppose Eberhart's program, especially inasmuch as the governor was a man of the "brewery faction"? Indeed, Norelius, the "humble son of a preacher," found it exceedingly paradoxical that the *Minnesota Stats Tidning*, supposedly a Christian paper, would support candidates backed by "ungodly" breweries.<sup>412</sup>

As it turned out, Stomberg's letter was only the beginning of a much broader campaign in the pages of the *Tidning*. On 4 September it gave front page space to an article by Dr. J. A. Krantz, president of the Minnesota Conference of the Swedish Lutheran Church. Krantz lavished praise upon the Swedish people in general and upon Eberhart and other high-ranking Swedish politicians in the state in particular. The "hardworking, honorable, and reliable" Swedes in Minnesota must be prepared to fight for "their" positions and influence. To Krantz, it was "common knowledge" that "others" were unreliable, while the Swedes were in possession of the "characteristic Nordic honesty."<sup>413</sup> On 11 September, K. A. Kilander of Gustavus Adolphus followed up by urging Swedes to take greater pride in their culture, be more willing to fight for Swedish causes, and to avoid at all cost handing control of the state government to "Yankees and Irishmen."<sup>414</sup>

By this time, a debate over the *Tidning's* tendencies had begun in the *Minneapolis Journal*, with other prominent Swedish Americans criticizing the ongoing ethnic

---

<sup>412</sup> *Chisago County Press*, 22 August, 1912, 4. Norelius's father was hardly a humble preacher. He had been a synod president and one of the most prominent Swedish Americans in the nineteenth century.

<sup>413</sup> *Minnesota Stats Tidning*, 4 September, 1912, 1.

<sup>414</sup> *Minnesota Stats Tidning*, 11 September, 1912, 1.

mobilization effort. The Anti-Saloon League's P. A. Youngdahl called Krantz's remarks "surprising" and "unworthy."<sup>415</sup> Dr. C. A. Peterson stated that such appeals "might have been excusable back in the eighties, but it don't go with us, the American-born Swedes. Let a man stand on his own merits, be he Swede, German, or Irish, or without."<sup>416</sup>

However, the *Tidning* continued to push for ethnic mobilization. Every Swede should celebrate Eberhart's victories as their own, and supporting the governor was both a "duty" and an "honor."<sup>417</sup> On the eve of the general election, the paper once again pointed out in quite bathetic terms the importance of supporting Swedish candidates. The *Tidning* even endorsed Norelius, who was running for the office of Secretary of State on the Bull Moose ticket.<sup>418</sup>

It is not clear who won this debate, or to what extent the concerns of the ethnic elite engaged in the debate reflected the concerns of other Swedish Americans (although the elite participants took that for granted). The *Chisago County Press* probably contributed to making Swedish-dominated Chisago County the most Roosevelt-dominated county in the state, but its efforts to discredit Eberhart had limited effect. Despite facing both Democratic and Progressive opponents, Eberhart won 48.4 per cent of the county vote. Notwithstanding the protestations of Norelius, Youngdahl, and Peterson, ethnicity still mattered.

Ethnicity is of particular interest because Minnesota during this time period was a highly heterogeneous society where immigrants and children of immigrants formed the majority of the population. Examining the ethnic origins of policy-makers sheds light on

---

<sup>415</sup> Quoted in the *Chisago County Press*, 12 September, 1912, 1.

<sup>416</sup> *Chisago County Press*, 12 September, 1912, 1.

<sup>417</sup> *Minnesota Stats Tidning*, 30 October, 1912, 4.

<sup>418</sup> *Ibid.*

both the role ethnicity played in politics and on the subtle status hierarchies that structured ethnic relations in the state. Between 1890 and 1920, the traditionally Republican state experienced a Populist upheaval against GOP tariff and currency policies, several Democratic upsets in gubernatorial elections, a progressive movement which transformed the state's political culture, the turmoil of World War I, and the early agitation of the Nonpartisan League and Farmer-Labor Party. Yet throughout these years of political change, which often reflected large-scale change in economic and cultural circumstances, the social composition of the state's governing elite remained remarkably stable. In what follows below, I briefly describe the composition of the potential and actual electorate before moving on to discuss the composition of the state senate, state house, and the high elite of Congressmen and executive officials.

Minnesota women were not allowed to vote or hold elected office beyond the narrow limits of school boards, school superintendents, and library boards until ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment to the U. S. Constitution in 1920. Some men were also considered unfit to vote. The state constitution limited the rights of men of Indian ancestry unless they had "adopted the language, customs and habits of civilization." In the case of so-called full-blooded Indians, this had to be proven by examination in district court. In 1896, large numbers of white men were disenfranchised when the state constitution was altered to require immigrants to be fully naturalized before they could vote. Before that time, immigrants had been able to vote upon receiving their "first papers" and stating their intent to become U. S. citizens. This change toward more restrictive voting laws was not unique to Minnesota; legislators and voters effected

the same change in many northern states between the 1890s and the 1920s.<sup>419</sup> Progressive Era politicians sought to “improve” the electorate, at the cost of exclusion of less desirable voters whom they believed to be incompetent and corruptible.

The new law meant that about one-third of the adult male immigrant population was ineligible to vote. Nevertheless, first- and second-generation Americans constituted a majority of the voting population in Minnesota. As seen in Table 6, the immigrant dominance in the electorate was slightly more pronounced than in the population at large, especially by 1920. Immigrants and their offspring not only composed the majority of the potential electorate, they were also the majority of actual voters. Differences in terms of voter turnout between Minnesota counties with different ethnic configurations were relatively small, and the direction of those differences varied over time. Overall, the relationship between ethnicity and turnout seems to have been highly context-dependent and variable. There is no indication, however, that native-stock Americans were much more likely than others to vote.<sup>420</sup> Thus, most votes cast in Minnesota in this period were

---

<sup>419</sup> For a discussion of the effect of this and other legal changes to the electoral process in the United States in this time period, see Paul Kleppner, *Who Voted? The Dynamics of Electoral Turnout, 1870 – 1980* (New York: Praeger, 1982), 58 – 63.

<sup>420</sup> In the 1890 gubernatorial election, for example, voter turnout was 71.6 percent in Olmsted County, a county with a relatively large proportion of old-stock Americans (by Minnesota standards). Turnout was 69.3 percent in Stearns County (predominantly German Catholic) and 66.1 percent in Chisago County (Swedish). All three counties surpassed the state figure of 64.4 percent. Estimated turnout in mostly Norwegian Norman County was lower, only 60.5 percent. However, due to the structure of 1890 census data, turnout figures can only be calculated using the total number of adult males as denominator, thus including in the calculation immigrants without first papers who were not eligible to vote even under the more liberal pre-1896 election law. Because of this, all turnout figures are underestimated, but more so in counties with many recent immigrants. These figures may thus exaggerate the difference between turnout in Norman County, in western Minnesota, and the three counties further east.

The estimates for 1910 and 1920, more accurate than those for 1890, show no clear and consistent relationship between ethnicity and turnout. In the 1910 gubernatorial election, Norman County, with less than 6 percent old-stock Americans, had a turnout of 68.8 percent. The turnout in Olmsted County, with 45 percent old-stock Americans, was 65.2 percent. Both of these figures exceeded the state total of 56.9 percent. Turnout in Stearns County was somewhat lower, 54.6 percent. Only 53.2 percent of Chisago

cast by the first- and second-generation immigrants who formed the majority of eligible voters.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Proportion of voting population (%)</i>			<i>Proportion of total population (%)</i>		
	<b>Foreign-born</b>	<b>Foreign-stock</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Foreign-born</b>	<b>Foreign-stock</b>	<b>Total</b>
1890	47.7	29.5*	77.2*	35.9	39.8	75.7
1900	40.8	34.0*	74.8*	28.8	45.9	74.7
1910	34.6	39.2	73.8	26.2	45.4	71.6
1920	26.0	46.9	72.9	20.4	44.2	64.6

Table 6. *Proportion of foreign-born and foreign-stock individuals in Minnesota's voting population and total population (%), 1890 – 1920. \* estimate*

Data on the nativity and occupations of legislators and executive officials were acquired from the legislative manuals published biannually by Minnesota's secretary of state. These manuals offered short biographical sketches of elected officials which,

---

County's eligible voters visited the polling stations, which is somewhat surprising considering the Republican candidate for governor was a Swede.

Whereas turnout declined appreciably from 1890 to 1910, as was generally the case in the United States in that era, the continuing nation-wide decline in turnout was not reflected in the 1920 election returns from Minnesota. Unlike 1910, 1920 was a presidential year, normally an important distinction. However, high turnout in 1920 was a product of the gubernatorial contest, not the presidential election. Substantial numbers in every comparison county voted for governor without bothering to choose a candidate for the presidency. The extreme case was Norman County, with 63.8 percent voting for president and 72.2 percent for governor. Part of this difference can probably be ascribed to the fact that both major candidates for the governorship (Republican Jacob Preus and independent Henrik Shipstead) were Norwegian. In the other counties examined here, the difference was 4 – 5 percentage points; statewide, turnout was 60.0 percent in the presidential election and 63.9 percent in the gubernatorial election. Chisago County, with the lowest turnout figure in 1910, had the highest rate of participation in 1920; 68.2 percent and 73.3 percent, respectively, for the presidential and the gubernatorial contests. Turnout figures well over 70 percent were unusual in the twentieth century and especially remarkable in the first election under the Nineteenth Amendment, showing the high degree of involvement of Scandinavian voters in the struggle between orthodox party politicians and the new, "non-partisan" challengers. Turnout figures in Stearns and Olmsted were a little below the state average in 1920.

The method used to calculate voter turnout was adopted from Kleppner, *Who Voted?*, 163. It should be noted that any inference drawn from aggregate data (such as county figures) runs the risk of drawing inappropriate conclusions about relationships at the level of individual actors based on a correspondence at the aggregate level. However, I do not think there is any compelling reason to believe that this particular analysis of ethnicity and turnout is especially likely to be subject to that ecological fallacy.

although not exactly systematic or consistent in their presentation, provided information on the relevant aspects of politicians' backgrounds in most cases. Information about the nativity of officials' parents was not usually available in the legislative manuals, and had to be acquired through searchable census databases. Due to the complexity of the latter process, it was left out in the case of the state House of Representatives (the number of representatives over a thirty-year period being prohibitively large).<sup>421</sup>

The comprehensive investigation of the ethnic background of Minnesota state senators shows that old-stock Americans never made up a majority in the eight Senates elected between 1890 and 1920. The proportion of old-stock senators varied between 28 percent (1910 election) and 48 percent (1902 election), generally exhibiting a downward trend throughout the period. These percentages did exceed old-stock Americans' share of the eligible electorate, especially in the first half of the period. In the elections after 1902, when old-stock senators accounted for, on average, 31 percent of all senators, the proportions of Yankee voters and Yankee senators were more similar. Old-stock Americans were a minority in the population, in the electorate, and in the state senate.<sup>422</sup>

First and second generation immigrants made up between 52 and 72 percent of senators in this time period, averaging 54 percent in the first four elections (1890 – 1902) and 69 percent in the last four (1906 – 1918). This increase in immigrant representation

---

<sup>421</sup> Population figures were drawn from the relevant federal census data. Election returns can be found in White et al., *Minnesota Votes*.

<sup>422</sup> Obviously, not everyone counted as an old-stock American here was a Yankee in the strict sense. Due to the nature of the census data, third-generation Germans Americans, Scandinavian Americans, etc., have to be counted as old-stock Americans. More generally, it is somewhat problematic to assume a direct relationship between objective data such as nativity or parents' nativity and a relatively complex and context-dependent concept like ethnicity. There can be little doubt, however, that national origin is the best proxy or operational variable available to the historian in this kind of research.



indicates the increasingly independent and assertive political participation of certain ethnic groups in the Progressive Era.

The proportion of foreign-born senators declined while the proportion of foreign-stock senators increased throughout the period, reflecting the trend in the general population. The number of foreign-born (but not foreign-stock) senators peaked in election years when the Republican hegemony was challenged, most notably in 1890, when the Democrats and the Farmers' Alliance won a majority of Senate seats. In that year, twenty of the fifty-four senators elected were first generation immigrants.

<b>Election year</b>	<b>Foreign- born (F1)</b>	<b>Foreign- stock (F2)</b>	<b>Old- stock</b>	<b>N/A*</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>F1+F2, %</b>	<b>Old- stock, %</b>
1890	20	7	23	4	54	54	46
1894	13	15	25	1	54	53	47
1898	7	27	26	3	63	57	43
1902	12	20	29	2	63	52	48
1906	13	30	19	1	63	68	32
1910	13	31	17	2	63	72	28
1914	14	30	20	1	65	69	31
1918	18	25	24	0	67	64	36

Table 7. *Foreign-born, foreign-stock, and old-stock senators in the Minnesota state Senate, 1890 – 1918.*

\* *N/A category = native-born senators whose parentage could not be ascertained. They were left out of the calculation of percentages. In other words, the denominator used in calculating the figures in the two far-right columns was  $N - N/A$ .*

Of those twenty senators, seven were German-born. This was an extraordinarily high number considering that the German-born only averaged one senator in the seven other elections of the time period. In post-1890 elections, the low numbers of German-born senators would be somewhat compensated by the higher numbers of senators of

German parentage. However, the total proportion of German Americans in the Minnesota Senate never exceeded the 1890 figure of 15 percent. Considering that German Americans probably accounted for over 20 percent of eligible voters, this amounted to considerable underrepresentation. The Germans formed the largest nationality group in the state, but were usually outnumbered in the Senate by the Norwegians and, in later elections, by the Irish and Swedes.

Year	National origin												
	Norw.		Swedish		German		Irish		Eur., other		Canadian		Mix
	F1	F2	F1	F2	F1	F2	F1	F2	F1	F2	F1	F2	F2
1890	5	1	4	0	7	1	0	3	3	1	1	1	0
1894	5	4	5	0	2	1	0	5	1	5	0	0	0
1898	4	4	1	0	1	8	0	7	1	6	0	2	0
1902	5	4	4	2	0	6	0	2	2	3	1	1	2
1906	4	6	4	2	1	6	1	6	1	5	2	2	3
1910	3	11	3	3	1	4	1	5	2	4	3	2	2
1914	4	7	1	5	1	3	1	5	2	5	5	3	2
1918	4	6	6	3	1	2	1	8	2	3	4	2	1

Table 8. *Foreign-born and foreign-stock senators in the Minnesota Senate, 1890 – 1918, by national origin.*

Scandinavian politicians especially were much more successful than Germans in winning Senate seats. Of the sixty-nine European-born men elected to the Minnesota Senate between 1890 and 1920, forty-three were born in Sweden or Norway.<sup>423</sup> The numbers of second-generation Scandinavian senators were modest in the 1890s, but increased dramatically in the early twentieth century. The Norwegians in particular

<sup>423</sup> These numbers do not match the numbers in Table 8, since some of the senators served more than one term.

benefited from their concentration of population and voting power in rural western Minnesota, and composed the largest ethnic bloc in six of eight Senates between 1890 and 1920. In the notably progressive Senate elected in 1910, there were in fact more Scandinavians (twenty) than old-stock Americans (seventeen).

Unlike the Germans, Scandinavian senators were overwhelmingly Republicans (the major exception being the 1890 election, when several Norwegians were elected on the Alliance ticket).<sup>424</sup> Many Germans in Minnesota were Catholics or confessional (Missouri Synod) Lutherans who gravitated toward the Democratic Party, giving German politicians a severe disadvantage in a time of Republican ascendancy. However, a disproportionate number of Irish were elected to the Senate despite the fact that most Irish voters were similarly Catholic and Democrat. This may suggest that the myth of the Irish-dominated Democratic Party had some truth to it, at least in Minnesota. As was the case with the Germans, most Irish officeholders were children of immigrant parents rather than foreign-born. By contrast, many of the Scandinavians, especially the Swedes, were born overseas. It is tempting to see this as evidence of the Scandinavians' greater ease of integration into the American political system, enabling them to seek and win office in the first generation of residence. However, it is possible that it merely reflects differentials in the flow of immigration, since the Swedes were in general more recent arrivals to the United States and to Minnesota than the German and Irish.

Norwegian and Swedish Americans accounted for almost half of the state senators of recent European origin (first and second generation) in this time period, averaging 42

---

<sup>424</sup> After 1911, the state legislature was nonpartisan.

percent of the “European” bloc in the first four elections and 48 percent in the four elections after 1905. Their percentage of all senators increased from 22 percent in the former period to 29 percent in the latter period. After 1905, the number of Germans and old-stock Americans in the Senate was declining. The major role the Scandinavians played in the popular progressive movement in Minnesota helps to explain this significant change in the Progressive Era. The post-1905 figure of 29 percent was roughly commensurate with the likely Scandinavian share of the total electorate in the state. There were, however, many more Norwegian than Swedish senators. Since the populations of the two groups were almost equal in size, it follows that the Norwegians were overrepresented and the Swedes underrepresented in relation to their overall numbers.

Overall, the ethnic composition of the Minnesota Senate largely reflected the ethnic composition of the population. Some groups (Irish, Norwegians, old-stock Americans) certainly did significantly better than others (Germans, Swedes), but it may be concluded with some confidence that an immigrant background was not a major impediment to a high-level political career in Minnesota in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. On the other hand, these immigrant senators were not recent immigrants. If born abroad, they had typically arrived in the United States as boys or young men and lived in the country for considerable lengths of time (20 – 30 years) before aspiring to political office at this level. It is also worth mention that no immigrant with a southern or eastern European background won election to the Senate in this period, however, these groups constituted a relatively small part of the total state population at the time.

Throughout the period from 1890 to 1920, Americans with recent European origins were even more dominant in the House than in the Senate. Although the much larger number of men elected to the House prevented a complete survey of parental origins, the data for foreign birth alone are strongly indicative of this fact. Whereas, on average, 23 percent of state senators were of foreign birth, 30 percent of representatives were. This proportion remained quite stable, although exhibiting a slight downward trend from an average of 33 percent in the first half of the period to 27 percent after 1905. This decline was much smaller than the decline of the foreign-born element in the voting population, from 48 percent in 1890 to 26 percent in 1920 (by means of comparison, the foreign-born constituted 31 percent of the House elected in 1890 and 28 percent of the one elected in 1920).

Meanwhile, the proportion of second-generation representatives must have been rising. Their share of the eligible population was increasing rapidly, and the Senate data show that this increase was reflected in increased representation there. The replacement of representatives born in the Northeast with representatives born and raised in the Midwest, and especially in Minnesota, also indicates that a greater fraction of the representatives were of foreign parentage. Among state senators, those of Northeastern birth were found to be considerably more likely to be old-stock Americans than those of Midwestern birth, and there is no reason to think that this was not similarly the case in the House. In both houses, the long-term trend was toward an increase in the number of

Midwest-born legislators and a decline in the numbers of men born in New England and the Middle Atlantic states.<sup>425</sup>

<b>Election year</b>	<b>N (known nativity)</b>	<b>Foreign- born</b>	<b>Midwest</b>	<b>Northeast</b>	<b>All native- born</b>
1890*	113/114	31.0	27.4	31.0	69.0
1892	110/114	34.5	35.5	28.2	65.5
1894	113/114	33.6	33.6	31.8	66.4
1896	109/114	31.2	37.0	30.3	68.8
1898	116/119	40.5	31.9	25.0	59.5
1900	112/119	25.9	50.0	20.2	74.1
1902	116/119	35.3	46.6	18.1	64.7
1904	117/119	29.9	52.1	17.9	70.1
1906	118/119	30.5	49.2	20.3	69.5
1908	118/119	25.4	57.6	16.9	74.6
1910	116/120	27.6	64.7	7.8	72.4
1912	115/120	29.6	57.4	12.2	70.4
1914	125/130	25.6	61.6	12.0	74.4
1916	125/130	24.0	66.4	8.0	76.0
1918	123/131	23.6	68.3	5.7	76.4
1920	121/131	28.1	62.8	6.6	71.9
<b>Average</b>		29.8	50.1	18.3	70.2

Table 9. *Nativity of representatives elected to the Minnesota House of Representatives, 1890 – 1920, %.*

\* *The biographical sketches for the 1891 House gives “America” as the birthplace of twelve representatives, without giving the state or region.*

Although it is not possible to give an exact figure for the total combined proportion of foreign-born and foreign-stock representatives in the House, it is reasonable to conclude that it must have averaged at least 60 percent, which would mean equal numbers of foreign-born and foreign-stock representatives. Extrapolating from the Senate

---

<sup>425</sup> The number of native-born legislators born in states outside the Midwest or Northeast was minuscule.

data, where the foreign-stock outnumbered the foreign-born in all but one election year, we can in fact say that this would be a very conservative estimate. It seems more likely that the average was close to 70 percent, and almost certainly at least that high after 1905. In other words, immigrants and their offspring were represented at rates close to their share of the voting population (around 75 percent throughout the period).

<b>Election year</b>	<b>Norwegian</b>	<b>Swedish</b>	<b>German</b>	<b>Other European</b>	<b>Canadian</b>
1890	8	9	5	9	4
1892	10	7	5	11	5
1894	13	4	6	9	6
1896	12	5	6	7	4
1898	14	8	8	7	10
1900	8	5	8	3	5
1902	10	10	6	5	9
1904	13	6	5	4	7
1906	10	5	9	5	7
1908	9	6	7	2	6
1910	10	9	4	4	5
1912	14	6	4	6	4
1914	12	9	3	5	3
1916	10	8	3	4	5
1918	7	6	5	10	1
1920	10	7	3	12	2

Table 10. *National origin of foreign-born representatives in the Minnesota House, 1890 – 1920.*

Among representatives of recent European ancestry, the Scandinavians were dominant, although possibly to a lesser degree in the House than in the Senate. Among the foreign-born, the Norwegians were by far the largest group, followed by the Swedes and Germans. As was the case in the Senate, the Germans in the House may have been mostly second-generation, and overall they may have outnumbered the Swedes (this is

informed conjecture only, in the absence of data on the parentage of native-born representatives). However, the Norwegians were clearly better represented than both Swedes and Germans in both houses of the state legislature, especially considering that they in the second half of the period were only the third largest nationality group in the state.

Although most foreign-born representatives belonged to the three major groups, there were substantial numbers of Europeans with other origins as well. In the House elected in 1894, for example, there were also legislators born in England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, Denmark, France, Bohemia, and Poland. The Dutch, Luxembourgers, Swiss, Austrians, German-Russians, Finns, and Icelanders were represented at other times within this period. Even during World War I, Minnesotans elected state legislators from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds, including several German-born immigrants. Minnesota was an immigrant state where most politicians had an immigrant background, a fact that did not change even when much of the country looked at immigrants in general and Germans in particular with suspicion.

Even in the highest echelons of Minnesota politics, most officeholders were immigrants or sons of immigrants. The Republican state ticket and its distribution of the top offices in the executive branch (governor, lieutenant governor, secretary of state, state treasurer, state auditor, and attorney general) were carefully designed to balance the demands of the state's major ethnic groups. Yet representation in the U. S. House of Representatives, where no such balancing and co-ordination was possible, and the Republican dominance was less complete, followed almost the exact same patterns as the executive branch. Of the 38 members who served in the U. S. House in this period, 9



were foreign-born, 14 were foreign-stock, and 14 were old-stock Americans (one representative was native-born, but of unknown parentage). Of the 39 men who served in top executive positions, 11 were foreign-born, 13 were foreign-stock, and 15 were old-stock. In other words, 38 percent in both groups belonged to the old-stock category, while 62 percent were either born abroad or had at least one foreign-born parent. Although this further re-enforces the notion of an immigrant majority at every level in Minnesota politics, it also means that old-stock Americans were quite heavily overrepresented in this high elite (their share exceeding by half again their share of the potential electorate). It is also noteworthy that the English, in many ways the “next best thing” to a Yankee, were more prominent at this level, with five Congressmen and three executive officials. In other words, the groups we might think of as having had the highest status in American society were also more visible at the highest level of state politics.

As in the state legislature, the Scandinavians were much more numerous in the Congressional delegation and the executive branch than the Germans. In all, the U. S. House representatives for this period featured six Norwegians, three Swedes, and one man of mixed Swedish and Norwegian parentage. Only the Norwegians had the level of population concentration necessary to monopolize individual House districts, as they did in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> districts after the reapportionment of 1901. Andrew Volstead and Halvor Steenerson held on to their seats for twenty years each, until unseated by fellow Norwegians in the 1922 election. Thus the Norwegians were the best represented of the major immigrant groups in the U. S. House, as in the state House and Senate. Nevertheless, the Scandinavians were not as well represented as the old-stock Americans. It should be kept in mind that there were probably as many Scandinavians as Yankees in

the electorate. Meanwhile, only one German was elected to represent Minnesota (and the state's largest ethnic group) in Congress in this thirty-year period.

Traditionally, the dominant Republican Party had designed the state ticket to distribute the lesser offices of state auditor, state treasurer, and secretary of state between the three major immigrant groups, while keeping the governorship in the hands of old-stock Americans. This only changed after the party's dramatic setback in the 1890 elections, which spurred the nomination of Norwegian Knute Nelson for governor in 1892. The re-nomination of another Norwegian, Frederick Brown, for secretary of state, meant that the ticket had two Norwegians and no Swedes. This led to considerable dissatisfaction among Swedish Republicans, and quite a lot of intra-Scandinavian feuding.<sup>426</sup> Before the 1894 election, Brown was replaced on the ticket by Albert Berg, a Swede. Swedes held the secretary of state position until 1906, when the Germans, who until then had controlled the state treasurer position, took over (while a Swede was nominated for lieutenant governor). With Nelson ascending to a seat in the U. S. Senate, the Norwegians were temporarily kept off the ticket, until they in 1900 received the state auditor position, and held that until 1920, when the state auditor, Jacob Preus, was nominated for governor. All in all, the extent to which the Republican nomination process (apparently both before and after the introduction of direct primaries) made the maintenance of a delicate ethnic balance a priority is striking.

The GOP did, however, move away from "ethnic" candidates for governor after Nelson's elevation to the Senate, and reinstated the old practice of putting forth old-stock

---

<sup>426</sup> This conflict is recounted in Sten Carlsson, *Skandinaviske politiker i Minnesota. En studie rörande den etniska faktorns roll vid politiska val i en immigrantstat* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1970), 35-38.

Americans for the governorship. This changed after three devastating defeats in the period from 1898 to 1906 to Scandinavian Democratic candidates (Swedes John Lind and John Johnson). Although Norwegian Jacob Jacobson was unsuccessful in his effort to oust the very popular Johnson in 1908, the Republicans continued to nominate Scandinavians for governor in every election for the remainder of the period (except in 1914, which was incidentally also the only other time they lost). The Scandinavians were quite dominant in the executive branch, especially towards the end of this era. During the United States' involvement in World War I, Minnesota had a Swedish governor and state treasurer, a Norwegian lieutenant governor and state auditor, and a German secretary of state. In the final days of the war, all five were re-elected. American skepticism about the loyalty of immigrants, especially Germans, did not change the fact that Minnesota was an immigrant state run largely by immigrant politicians. The only office that remained consistently in the hands of the old-stock/English/Anglo-Canadian segment of the population throughout this time period was that of attorney general.

Even though ethnic affiliation did matter, occupational status was far more important in determining one's chances of being elected to office. Virtually everyone elected state senator between 1890 and 1920 belonged to a medium- or high-status occupation, and the overwhelming majority of senators were businessmen and professionals who gave the Senate a solidly middle-class character. The businessmen were typically owners and/or managers of small businesses; they were general merchants, grocers, lumbermen, implement dealers, grain buyers, flour or saw mill managers, manufacturers, bankers, insurance agents, and real estate dealers. Their proportion of Senate seats barely changed over time, and averaged 38 percent over the eight senates in

this time period. The professionals, averaging 41 percent of the Senate total, were mostly lawyers, although some were editors, physicians, or clergymen.

The range of occupations was limited in the state House as well. The House would typically have one or two craftsmen among its representatives (blacksmiths, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, etc.) but would otherwise consist virtually exclusively of farmers and solidly middle-class businessmen and professionals. The main difference from the Senate was the much higher proportion of farmers in the lower chamber. Farmers accounted for, on average, about one-third of representatives, and this proportion changed remarkably little over time.

The top leadership in Minnesota's politics was much less diverse in terms of occupational backgrounds – a narrow elite of lawyers, newspaper editors, bankers, and lumbermen. About half of the executive officials were lawyers, as were almost two-thirds of the representatives to the U. S. House. Those outside the businessman-professional matrix only very rarely entered into this elite, and then usually as third-party candidates. The proportion of lawyers increased at each level of Minnesota politics. It reached 100 percent at the highest level, that of U. S. senators.

As the American Founders understood, the effects of elections are not purely democratic; rather, they contain elements of both democracy and aristocracy. Elections will tend to produce representatives that by some standard of judgment seem “better” than others, rather than being purely representative in the descriptive sense of mirroring the characteristics of the population or electorate. Thus the representatives of the people were and are drawn primarily from groups with high social status, and the higher the office and the larger the constituency, the greater the difference in status background

between the representatives and the people they are to represent.<sup>427</sup> Despite the constant, impassioned pleas for “the people” in the Progressive Era, Minnesota could not escape this iron law. Perhaps the most striking feature of the state’s elite between 1890 and 1920 is that even as the representative personnel at most levels changed rather frequently, the overall social composition of the political elite changed very little. This is especially remarkable considering the rapid demographic, economic, and social changes of the time period.

The persistence of clear patterns in political representation over time makes it all the more legitimate to identify political hierarchies with underlying structures of social stratification. The upper end of the ethnic hierarchy, namely old-stock Americans, Englishmen, and Anglo-Canadians, was overrepresented, especially in the highest offices. Nevertheless, it is notable that this segment of the population never was numerically dominant in the state’s political elite. Minnesota was an immigrant state in terms of both population and political leadership.

In fact, the biggest discrepancies in representativeness appear not between old-stock Americans and a composite category of immigrants, but between the various immigrant groups. While eleven Scandinavians served in Congress during this time period, only one German did. Whereas six Scandinavians were elected governor, no German won that office. Although the differences were somewhat less glaring in the state legislature, the Norwegians in particular were far better represented than the Germans there as well. Some of these differences can be ascribed to the dominance of the

---

<sup>427</sup> For a discussion of this topic in the specific context of the Founding, see Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government*, 102 – 131.

Republican Party, which attracted more Scandinavians than Germans. Yet the consistently low representation of Germans, the state's largest nationality group, is an important fact of Minnesota history. In all likelihood, their inferior representation both reflected and re-enforced an inferior status in the ethnic hierarchy of the time period.

The examination of politicians' occupational backgrounds provides further evidence for political representation as a process tending to cement rather than subvert existing hierarchies of status and power. Many, perhaps most, eligible officeholders were de facto excluded from holding political office by virtue of their class. There are, of course, a number of reasons why elected representatives might need to have a specific set of experiences, skills, abilities, and talents. On the other hand, political historians should also begin to consider the issues of trust, communication, authenticity, legitimacy, and recognition involved in the representation of diverse backgrounds, as suggested by scholars such as Mansbridge and Phillips. To determine the effects class bias in political representation had on policy, or on working people's feelings of political efficacy or alienation, is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but ought to be an interesting topic for future research.

Representative government in Minnesota in the period from 1890 to 1920 exhibited the dual tendency of all political representation based on elections: a democratic element in participation, an aristocratic element in selection. The consistent tendency of the state's elective bodies to reflect society's status hierarchies rather than mirror the socio-demographics of the electorate leads us to ask how profound the political changes of the much-touted Progressive Era really were, and to recognize the continuing paradox of representation and the limits of democracy.

Although this chapter has identified some differences, or even discrepancies, in the representation of Minnesota's major ethnic groups, the research presented above also suggests that in this context, class was far more crucial in defining status and opportunity among the white male population. Businessmen and professionals found themselves in positions of trust and at the center of local social networks even before embarking on a political career. Thus they were perfectly positioned to seek further confirmation and enhancement of their status and power by becoming involved in politics. Ethnic networks played an important role in that process, but not all immigrants had the same opportunities for availing themselves of those networks. As seen in the Swedish debate about Eberhart's candidacy, those with degrees, titles, and connections tended to dominate public discourse, even within the ethnic group. Class mattered, and sometimes it mattered more than ethnicity.

## 6: IMMIGRANTS AND POLITICAL MOBILIZATION

In the 1880s, Swedish immigrant Frans H. Widstrand published a radical monthly newspaper, *Rothuggaren*, in Litchfield, Minnesota. According to its mast, *Rothuggaren* was dedicated to “the abolition of poverty, ignorance, wickedness, promiscuity, drunkenness, injustice, prejudice and all evil.” When a nativist agitator suggested that only the native-born should be allowed to vote, Widstrand protested:

While it may be well to limit suffrage to intelligence and virtue, it certainly does not follow that those qualities are found only among persons who are born in America. Judging from averages is very unjust to individuals, but even that computation does not turn out favorably to the natives of America.<sup>428</sup>

This kind of sentiment was not uncommon among immigrants in the Midwest. Although some immigrants were largely apolitical, many had their own opinions and saw no need to defer to the native-born in political matters. Where there were immigrants, there were usually immigrant politicians and activists.

At election time, immigrant and second-generation officeholders, activists, and editors sought to mobilize “their” groups along ethnic lines. This chapter offers some examples of how ethnic identity sometimes became entwined with political identity, creating situations where the mobilization of one group of immigrants had the potential to rearrange an entire state’s political scene. It considers certain crucial junctures in the

---

<sup>428</sup> *Rothuggaren*, August 1881, 2.



electoral history of several states in the Upper Midwest in the early twentieth century, beginning with the 1906 gubernatorial election in North Dakota.

The so-called “revolution of 1906” is recognized as a crucial turning point in North Dakota political history. The election of Democrat John Burke for governor was a major defeat for the Republican machine, heralding the end of boss rule by the infamous Alexander McKenzie. A deep rift between pro- and anti-McKenzie factions within the Republican Party was the immediate cause of Burke’s upset victory. However, the remarkably sharp division between “regulars” and “insurgents” was not only a manifestation of power struggle and ideological differences; it also reflected diverging political trends among the state’s ethnic groups.

The dramatic change in electoral support for the two parties in the gubernatorial election can be ascribed to a political attitude best characterized as *conditional republicanism*, a fundamental personal and ethno-collective identification with the Republican Party coupled with willingness to abandon the party at the ballot box. Conditional republicans, imbued with a new spirit of electoral independence, went beyond party loyalty to create a broader political identity encompassing traditional party allegiance, ethnic identity, and progressive politics. Scandinavian voters traditionally loyal to the GOP would cross party lines and support progressive alternatives over Republican standpatters. The evidence examined here suggests that this phenomenon played a considerable role in North Dakota electoral politics. In fact, it was probably the decisive factor behind the unprecedented Democratic triumph in 1906.

From the time when North Dakota became a state in 1889, it was largely under the political control of Alexander McKenzie, national committeeman for the Republican

Party. It was McKenzie who in 1883 had managed to make Bismarck the capital of Dakota Territory, and he gained a reputation for being a man who got things done. He never held any public office beyond the local level, but was extremely well connected. His links to the state's two main railroads, the Northern Pacific and the Great Northern, were well known. He also forged ties to national powerbrokers such as Mark Hanna in order to secure control over federal patronage. McKenzie was not afraid to resort to bribery, intimidation, or fraud to get things done. Legislators could receive hundreds of dollars for important votes, while individual voters were "persuaded" by liquor in the nominally dry state.<sup>429</sup>

Despite temporary setbacks such as the election of a Democrat-supported Populist governor in 1892, the McKenzie machine retained its power into the twentieth century. By 1903, however, there were signs that advocates for progressive reform and "clean" government were banding together with disappointed office-seekers whose ambitions had been thwarted by McKenzie. These insurgent Republicans joined the Democrats to take control of the state House of Representatives. By 1905, insurgents had formed an organization called the Republican Good Government League to challenge the dominance of the regular or machine Republicans. A new law meant that delegates to state conventions would be elected in primaries. Nonetheless, the efforts of the Good Government League failed at the Republican convention in 1906. The slate of nominees was the one put together by the machine leaders in McKenzie's suite in the Merchants

---

<sup>429</sup> For McKenzie's life and career, see Robert P. Wilkins, "Alexander McKenzie and the Politics of Bossism," in *The North Dakota Political Tradition*, ed. Thomas Howard (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1981), 3-39. See also Elwyn B. Robinson, *History of North Dakota* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 230-231.

Hotel in St. Paul.<sup>430</sup> “GRAND OLD PARTY MAKES SPLENDID NOMINATIONS,” concluded a headline in the *Bismarck Tribune*, edited by one of McKenzie’s men.<sup>431</sup>

But the circumstances of the 1906 campaign were not all that splendid for the standpat Republicans. The re-nominated governor, Elmore Sarles, served alcohol in the executive mansion and drank beer in public, causing outrage among prohibitionists. One of the nominees for Supreme Court judge, John Knauf, was better known for his ability to get out the Stutsman County vote than for his judicial qualifications. Worst of all, McKenzie himself was severely discredited by the publication of “The Looting of Alaska,” which described the outrageous scheme he had devised to defraud foreign gold prospectors several years earlier. Progressive newspapers such as the *Grand Forks Herald* reprinted these articles and intensified their attacks on the alleged corruption and incompetence of McKenzie and his lieutenants, including Governor Sarles.<sup>432</sup>

The Democrats nominated “Honest” John Burke as their candidate against the machine.<sup>433</sup> His victory marked a watershed in North Dakota politics, although Sarles and Knauf were the only unsuccessful candidates on the Republican ticket. The gubernatorial election of 1906 was a *deviating* election, defined as an election in which “the basic division of partisan loyalties is not seriously disturbed, but the attitude forces on the vote are such as to bring about the defeat of the majority party.”<sup>434</sup> In other words, it was not a *realigning* election, the kind of election in which “basic partisan commitments of a

---

<sup>430</sup> Wilkins, “McKenzie and the Politics of Bossism,” 32-33; idem & Wynona Huchette Wilkins, *North Dakota: A Bicentennial History* (New York: Norton, 1977), 109-112.

<sup>431</sup> *Bismarck Tribune*, 13 July, 1906, 1. The editor, M. H. Jewell, was also secretary of the Republican State Central Committee.

<sup>432</sup> Wilkins, “McKenzie and the Politics of Bossism,” 33; Charles N. Glaab, “John Burke and the Progressive Revolt,” in Howard, *op. cit.*, 55-57; Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, 265.

<sup>433</sup> For Burke’s life and career, see Glaab, “John Burke and the Progressive Revolt,” 40-65.

<sup>434</sup> Angus Campbell et al., *The American Voter* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1960), 532-533.

portion of the electorate change.”<sup>435</sup> Republican congressional candidates, as well as all but two Republicans on the state ticket, won by considerable margins.<sup>436</sup> Burke’s victory was a result of Republicans defecting from their own party, and did not reflect a lasting change in party identification.

According to political scientist Morris Fiorina, there are two kinds of voters: the “traumatized” and the “responsive.” Party identification can be seen as a “running tally of retrospective evaluation,” and the main distinction between the two types of voters lies in the stability of their preferences and evaluations. The traumatized voter retains a loyalty shaped under unusual circumstances (such as war or economic depression). The responsive voter, by contrast, is more likely to adjust his voting behavior to the short-term performance of political parties.<sup>437</sup>

The regular Republicans connected with the McKenzie machine relied heavily on appealing to the traumatized voter. They celebrated the prosperity of William McKinley’s and Theodore Roosevelt’s presidencies after a shocking depression under Grover Cleveland. To many Republican minds, the depression was a Democratic phenomenon, and every Democratic vote a vote for “soup houses, Coxey’s armies, free wheat, tramps, and starvation.”<sup>438</sup> They also reminded voters of the Civil War, almost half a century in the past. To them, the Republican Party had never ceased to be the party of Lincoln, the Union, and boom times. Supporting Governor Sarles, the *Bismarck Tribune*, *Fargo Forum*, and *Grand Forks Times* highlighted the importance of organizational unity, while

---

<sup>435</sup> *Ibid.*, 534.

<sup>436</sup> For election returns, see *1907 Legislative Manual* (Bismarck: North Dakota Dept. of State, 1907)

<sup>437</sup> Morris P. Fiorina, *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 89-91.

<sup>438</sup> *Grand Forks Times*, 30 October, 1906, 4.

raising time and time again the specter of Cleveland soup houses, the essence of Democratic rule. These newspapers instructed young men in the art of voting the straight ticket, and appealed to the kind of unshakeable party loyalty that had been characteristic of nineteenth-century politics.

Meanwhile, the *Grand Forks Herald* took a very different view of the upcoming election, and appealed to the responsive voter. Editor and leading insurgent George Winship reflected on the poor attendance at Republican rallies, and sought an explanation in the party's avoidance of contemporary issues. He assumed that voters had "as a rule, all the information they care for at present concerning Lincoln, Jefferson, the civil war, General Jackson, the nullification act and the deluge."<sup>439</sup> Though acknowledging a continuing attachment to the Republican Party, Winship described a political identity which incorporated a broader view of political economy, ideology, policies, and leadership. With this went a fiercely independent attitude toward voting-booth behavior: "Let every tub stand on its own bottom, and place the public good before a party name."<sup>440</sup>

Between the 1870s and the 1890s, party support changed very little from election to election. Strong partisanship and high levels of electoral participation characterized the period, and logically electoral strategy revolved around mobilizing party loyalists rather than persuading rare independent voters.<sup>441</sup> By the 1890s, these patterns were changing. In the new era, some voters were less attached and less loyal to their parties, and election

---

<sup>439</sup> *Grand Forks Herald*, 2 November, 1906, 10.

<sup>440</sup> *Grand Forks Herald*, 4 October, 1906, 8; 4 November, 1906, 8.

<sup>441</sup> Walter Dean Burnham, *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics* (New York: Norton, 1970), 72-73.

results varied considerably more from one election to the next.<sup>442</sup> Two conflicting sets of ideas about how to choose a candidate confronted voters. Traditionally, parties expected voters to remain loyal and vote the straight ticket. The new ideal demanded more from the voter: an independent evaluation of each candidate's merits as part of an increasingly complex calculus. The 1906 campaign in North Dakota developed into a rhetorical struggle between proponents of these two ideals.

Once a machine-endorsed state ticket had been nominated at the Jamestown Republican convention, the *Bismarck Tribune* predicted "the largest majority ever known in the state" and went to work getting out the loyalist vote.<sup>443</sup> The *Fargo Forum* quoted an alleged insurgent from Cass County as saying "[t]here are no insurgents now. We are all republicans."<sup>444</sup> It was time to "come together," and every Republican should "put his shoulder to the wheel to roll up just as large a majority as possible."<sup>445</sup> Since the ticket constituted a "fair expression of the will of the delegates elected by the people," the *Tribune* held that it was the duty of all Republicans to support the Republican ticket.<sup>446</sup> The paper told Republicans not to "give aid and comfort to the enemy," bolting the party amounted to treason.<sup>447</sup> Calls for the protection of "Grandma Democracy" were written off as "sophistries," and every conceivable argument was made on behalf of voting the

---

<sup>442</sup> Paul Kleppner, *Continuity and Change in Electoral Politics, 1893 – 1928* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 45-51.

<sup>443</sup> *Bismarck Tribune*, 13 July, 1906, 1.

<sup>444</sup> *Fargo Forum*, 13 July, 1906, 4.

<sup>445</sup> *Fargo Forum*, 14 July, 1906, 10.

<sup>446</sup> *Bismarck Tribune*, 13 July, 1906, 2.

<sup>447</sup> *Bismarck Tribune*, 30 October, 1906, 2.

straight ticket, including its timesaving potential: “life is too short and the exigencies do not warrant the voting of any other kind of ticket.”<sup>448</sup>

The *Tribune* found time to blast the *Grand Forks Herald* and its insurgent editor. According to the *Tribune*, the *Herald* was remarkable for the “absolute falsehood and corruption of its news columns,” its manufacture of figures and news, and its editor’s disregard of “any reputation whatever for truth and reliability.”<sup>449</sup> Winship, one of the leaders of the Good Government League (or the “self-haloed reformers,” as the *Tribune* put it), was accused of being simply a disgruntled office-seeker “hooked out of the herd” like a dysfunctional buffalo.<sup>450</sup>

Meanwhile, the *Herald*’s position was clear: the people “must rise superior to party and vote for a principle of government rather than for a political machine.”<sup>451</sup> In this view, the election pitted loyalty to the party against the desire for “good government.”<sup>452</sup> Governor Sarles was “unfit,” and the nomination of Knauf had “disgusted self respecting men all over the state.” Republicans should not support such “unfit men nominated in defiance of public sentiment,” but rather “rid the party of its rotten timber” and “place the public good before a party name.”<sup>453</sup>

The largest newspaper in North Dakota at the time was not the *Tribune*, the *Forum*, the *Herald*, or the *Times*. It was the Norwegian-language *Normanden*, published in Grand Forks. More than 20 percent of the state’s population spoke Norwegian as their first language, and the legislature elected in 1906 had twenty-six members born in

---

<sup>448</sup> *Bismarck Tribune*, 3 November, 1906, 2; 5 November, 1906, 2.

<sup>449</sup> *Bismarck Tribune*, 26 June, 1906, 2.

<sup>450</sup> *Bismarck Tribune*, 30 June, 1906, 2; 1 November, 1906, 2.

<sup>451</sup> *Grand Forks Herald*, 26 September, 1906, 8.

<sup>452</sup> *Grand Forks Herald*, 14 October, 1906, 4.

<sup>453</sup> *Grand Forks Herald*, 4 November, 1906, 8.

Norway.<sup>454</sup> Thus *Normanden* and its Fargo rival *Fram* had the potential for exerting significant political influence.

Like the *Grand Forks Herald*, *Normanden* was a Republican but anti-machine paper, and its rhetoric emphasizing independence and moral purity closely resembled that of George Winship. The main difference between the two papers was the greater vehemence of the Norwegian paper, aggressively denouncing McKenzie and other ring leaders in persistent and relentless tirades of condemnation. The party regulars, in *Normanden*'s view, were tools of corporations and simply "beat the party drum" for their own sinister purposes, including private gain.<sup>455</sup>

After the insurgent defeat at the state convention, *Normanden* peppered its editorial page with aphorisms: "it is possible to support republican principles – without supporting republican corruption;" "a party which plainly lacks a program, no longer has any role to play in a democratic society;" "the best citizen is often the poorest party man;" and, finally, "the citizens of North Dakota will no longer support a straight gang ticket."<sup>456</sup>

Fuel was added to the insurgent fire by the publication of "The Looting of Alaska," promptly translated into Norwegian and serialized in *Normanden*. Several years earlier, Boss McKenzie had involved himself in a fraudulent scheme to take over Alaskan land claims held by immigrant gold prospectors. As it happened, many of these prospectors were Scandinavians. At one point in this Alaska adventure, McKenzie had

---

<sup>454</sup> The two other major ethnic groups in North Dakota were the Germans and German-Russians. Among the members of the legislature elected in 1906, only six were born in Germany and three in Russia. This discrepancy in representation fits well with the findings of the previous chapter.

<sup>455</sup> *Normanden*, 13 June, 1906, 1.

<sup>456</sup> *Normanden*, 22 August, 1906, 4; 29 August, 1906, 4; 12 September, 1906, 4.



strutted unarmed through a crowd of furious foreigners. Later asked to explain his cool composure, McKenzie quipped that “they were mostly Swedes. Give me a barnyard of Swedes, and I’ll drive them like sheep.”<sup>457</sup>

*Normanden* had a proverbial field day with this story. Although there were few Swedes in the state, there were a great many Norwegians, and soon incensed editorials revealed that McKenzie thought he could drive “Scandinavians” like sheep. On September 12 an editorial entitled “The Scandinavians and the Ring Leaders” appeared.<sup>458</sup> It discussed the self-proclaimed high status of Scandinavians in the state, and their noble and successful fight for prohibition. Against this righteous people stood McKenzie and his cronies, who thought they could drive Scandinavians like sheep. Scandinavians might have voted the straight ticket uncritically in the past, but now *Normanden* declared that it was time to show independence and defeat the machine. On September 26, *Normanden* went further in clarifying its stance. *Normanden* was still to be considered a Republican paper supportive of the Roosevelt administration, but the paper no longer considered the Republican Party in North Dakota representative of republican principles. Instead, it had become a party of special interests, oligarchy, and corruption. Republicans should cast their votes for Republican congressional candidates to ease the work of the president, but the state ticket did not deserve the support of true Republicans.<sup>459</sup>

A sense of moral superiority pervaded *Normanden*’s attempt to rally Norwegians against the machine. On October 3, an article in the *Bismarck Tribune* discussing the

---

<sup>457</sup> Wilkins, “McKenzie and the Politics of Bossism,” 19.

<sup>458</sup> *Normanden*, 12 September, 1906, 4.

<sup>459</sup> *Normanden*, 26 September, 1.

possible licensing of illegal saloons for revenue purposes gave *Normanden* a marvelous opportunity to scold both the *Tribune* and Governor Sarles. According to the paper, Sarles was a “good fellow” who drank and let others drink, law or no law.<sup>460</sup> *Normanden* also printed accusations by Elizabeth Preston Anderson of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, who claimed that Sarles had been drunk when giving a speech at the Lewis-Clark exhibition in Portland, Oregon. Sarles, in Anderson’s view, was an embarrassment to the state, and the “better element” of the populace had seen his nomination as a mistake even two years earlier.<sup>461</sup>

Apparently the humiliating idea of an entire people driven to the voting stations like so many mindless sheep lit a sudden flare in the minds of otherwise stolid folk. On October 24, *Normanden* published a special issue devoted in its entirety to angry letters condemning the moral depravity, corruption, and incompetence of the McKenzie machine and the Sarles administration. Filled with moral indignation, these letters from life-long Republicans also celebrated the new spirit of independent voting. As “E. E., Osnabruck” proclaimed, Norwegians could maintain their Republican loyalties without acting like “blind party slaves.”<sup>462</sup> This outlook was typical of both the letter-writers and the editors of *Normanden* and *Fram*.

Standpat Republicans, by contrast, continued to rely on traditional appeals to party loyalty and to remind partisans of the Civil War and the Cleveland Depression. Every day during the electoral season, the *Bismarck Tribune* printed the same Mark Hanna quote on the editorial page:

---

<sup>460</sup> *Normanden*, 3 October, 1906, 1.

<sup>461</sup> *Normanden*, 10 October, 1906, 1.

<sup>462</sup> *Normanden*, 24 October, 1906, 6.

It is a serious thought that I want you to take home. Republican or Democrat, take it home tonight and think it over. Compare the conditions by your fireside today with those which existed under the Cleveland administration, and then make up your minds, and when you have reached a decision, ‘stand pat.’<sup>463</sup>

The activism found in the Norwegian newspapers also contrasted sharply with the extremely sparse political coverage in the *Wishek News* in south-central North Dakota, an area predominantly settled by German-Russian Protestants. It was only days before the election when the *News* finally issued a brief comment. Ignore the “guerilla campaign” of “democrats and the W. C. T. U.,” it advised, and “put an ‘X’ at the head of the ticket in the Republican column.”<sup>464</sup>

Traditionally both Norwegians and German-Russians were Republican loyalists, contributing to the development of something close to a one-party state in North Dakota in the late nineteenth century.<sup>465</sup> However, the statistical evidence from the 1906 gubernatorial elections suggests that this loyalty ran much deeper among the German-Russians than among the Norwegians. Although such relationships are difficult to establish without (unavailable) data on individual behavior, there are ways to approach the problem utilizing available aggregate-level data.<sup>466</sup> For instance, fifteen counties had

---

<sup>463</sup> *Bismarck Tribune*, see, e.g., 24 October, 1906, 2. The original quote was from 1903.

<sup>464</sup> *Wishek News*, 31 October, 1906, 1. An ‘X’ at the head of the ticket meant a vote for each Republican candidate on the ticket, in other words, a straight ticket.

<sup>465</sup> Norwegian Lutherans belonged to the “pietistic alliance” which formed the backbone of the Republican Party in the late nineteenth century. See Kleppner, *The Cross of Culture: A Social Analysis of Midwestern Politics, 1850-1900* (New York: The Free Press, 1970), 84-88.

<sup>466</sup> Any analysis on the basis of aggregate data runs the risk of drawing inappropriate conclusions about relationships between two variables at the individual level on the basis of a correspondence at the aggregate level, the so-called ecological fallacy. As the quantitative findings in this study generally mesh well with the non-quantitative evidence I have examined, I will not discuss this methodological problem in detail here. It is, however, worth mentioning that the electoral results also show a distinctive geographic split to

a population of more than 20 percent first- and second-generation Norwegian Americans, and the average Democratic vote for governor in these counties was 61.6 percent. By contrast, the ten counties with more than 20 percent German-Russians on average gave the Democratic candidate only 27.8 percent of the vote.<sup>467</sup> Statistical analysis including all forty counties give a correlation of .60 between Norwegian population and Democratic vote percentages, and a correlation of .71 between German-Russian population and Republican voting.

For various reasons, such calculations are not entirely satisfactory in this case. The German-Russian population in North Dakota at the time was low in most counties and very high in some counties. However, a closer look at the three most heavily German-Russian counties suggests that this group was indeed almost monolithically Republican. The counties of McIntosh, Logan, and Mercer gave Governor Sarles 95.1, 88.4, and 95.3 percent of the vote, respectively. In McIntosh County, most precincts did not report any Burke votes at all. Similarly, the Second Precinct of Logan County's Third District reported fifty-six votes for Sarles, none for Burke. There can be little doubt that the overwhelming majority of German-Russians, or at least German-Russian Protestants, voted a straight Republican ticket in 1906.

Meanwhile, a county-by-county analysis of vote change between 1904 and 1906 indicates that the 1906 "revolution" was in part a result of the conditional republicanism

---

some extent independent of ethnic settlement patterns. The insurgent revolution was largely a phenomenon restricted to the more settled areas in the eastern parts of the state, and had less impact in the frontier-like conditions of western North Dakota.

<sup>467</sup> Ethnic data based on the 1910 U. S. Census. Note that a proportion of 20 percent of the population usually means a larger "ethnic" proportion of the voting population, especially in the case of older immigrant groups. This because the non-voting population included many third-generation children who would be counted as "native-born of native parents."

of Norwegian voters. In five counties, a dramatic rise in Democratic support brought the gubernatorial vote up from less than 30 percent to more than 70 percent (increases ranging from 43.9 to 53.8 percentage points).<sup>468</sup> All of these were among the counties with a high proportion of Norwegians. In the German-Russian counties, by contrast, the “revolution” was largely a non-event. In McIntosh, Democratic support dropped from 5.5 percent in 1904 to 4.2 percent in 1906; in Mercer, it increased from 4.0 percent to 4.1 percent. Overall, correlating ethnicity with increases in Democratic support yields a figure of .56 for Norwegians and -.62 for German-Russians. In other words, in the context of a high degree of overall change, change was much more likely in counties with many Norwegians and much less likely in counties with many German-Russians.<sup>469</sup>

The decisive importance of Scandinavian Republicans with independent tendencies manifested itself in neighboring Minnesota as well. The governor of that state at the time was John Johnson, a Swedish Democrat. He was the son of a drunken vagabond and a washerwoman, a quintessential “man of the people” who rose from store clerk to newspaper editor, from editor to political prodigy. Having been a Republican until he acquired an interest in a Democratic newspaper in the 1880s, Johnson liked to de-emphasize party politics and focus instead on personal character and the general idea of

---

<sup>468</sup> The five counties were: Benson, Ramsey, Griggs, Pierce, and Grand Forks.

<sup>469</sup> A curious example of the unchanging character of the latter group’s voting behavior is the county of Emmons. For a German-Russian county it had a relatively substantial Democratic minority of 30.4 percent in the 1904 gubernatorial election. More than likely, the fact that many Emmons German-Russians were Catholic rather than Protestant explains this considerable Democratic base. However, the 1906 election brought no change in voting patterns, and John Burke received only 31.0 percent of the vote. Thus, Emmons went from being one of the top ten Democratic counties in 1904 to being one of the top ten Republican counties two years later. Research on German-Russian Catholics in Kansas indicates that a majority there were Democrats. See David A. Haury, “German-Russian Immigrants to Kansas and American Politics,” in *Kansas History*, 3 (Winter, 1980): 226-237. Estimates of the religious background of German-Russian immigrants to the Dakotas suggest that 55 percent were Lutheran, 35 percent Catholic, and 10 percent Mennonite, Reformed, or Baptist. William Sherman, *Prairie Mosaic: An Ethnic Atlas of Rural North Dakota* (Fargo, N. D.: North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, 1983), 50.

progressive reform. He appealed to the spirit of independence, and the combination of Swedish ethnicity and progressive politics wreaked havoc on GOP efforts to keep its Scandinavian base in line.

As the 1906 election season neared, reform-minded Scandinavians saw the solution to their problems in the figure of Jacob F. Jacobson, a Norwegian Republican with recognized progressive credentials. The failure of Jacobson's candidacy at the state convention in June came as a shock. In Swedish-dominated Chisago County, Sam Ringquist of the *Chisago County Press* fumed against the Minneapolis machine, decrying the nomination of Albert Cole for governor as a result of a convention "of the bosses, for the bosses, and by the bosses."<sup>470</sup> Predicting the re-election of John Johnson, Ringquist also railed against the mistreatment of Swedes in the Republican Party. He saw Adolph Eberhart's nomination for lieutenant governor as the most despicable tokenism, a poorly concealed punishment for defections in 1904. When the *St. Paul Dispatch* advised the Swedes "not to get sore," Ringquist blasted the GOP, pointing out that his people had supported the Republican Party for decades with few tangible rewards. "There is a point," he wrote, "where the worm turns."<sup>471</sup> The Republican Party had failed to satisfy progressive sentiments, and had added insult to injury by slighting ethnic pride

Yet Ringquist and the *Press* were not ready to abandon the party. On the contrary, the post-convention fury abated, and by October, Ringquist described Cole as a man of "progressive views" so advanced as to "appeal strongly to the thinking element of the party."<sup>472</sup> As it turned out, Cole was a man out to protect the people from the

---

<sup>470</sup> *Chisago County Press*, 21 June, 1906, 4.

<sup>471</sup> *Chisago County Press*, 2 August, 1906, 4.

<sup>472</sup> *Ibid.*, 18 October, 4.

corporate interests, and certainly *not* a tool of the lumber industry (as Ringquist himself had previously implied).<sup>473</sup> Two weeks before the election, the turnaround was almost complete. Cole, the *Press* maintained, was a candidate “equal if not superior” to Johnson, making it “natural” for traditional Republicans to “go to the party with whom they have so long been identified.”<sup>474</sup> The people of Chisago County were, after all, men of Republican principles, and the party’s gubernatorial candidate had been nominated “in a careful, fair, honest and deliberate manner.”<sup>475</sup>

Faced with the tension between ethnic identity, party loyalty, and ideology, the *Press* responded with inconsistency and patent insincerity, damning its own endorsee with faint praise while offering no substantive criticism of the Swedish incumbent’s record. Sam Ringquist’s anguish mirrored the ambivalence of the Chisago County electorate, largely Swedish and Republican (Theodore Roosevelt won 91 percent of the vote there in 1904). In the end, 56 percent supported Johnson, while 43 percent voted for Cole.

This pattern repeated itself throughout the state. The Swedish-language weekly *Svenska Folkets Tidning*, published in St. Paul, was similarly torn between party loyalty and an ever more overt affection for the governor. Early in the electoral season, the *SFT* hailed the Republican Party’s accomplishments.<sup>476</sup> However, concerns soon arose over the tendency of other Republican papers to go too far in comparing the grand future accomplishments of Cole to the alleged lack of accomplishments on Johnson’s part. *SFT* editorials drifted in the opposite direction of Ringquist’s, exhibiting an increasingly

---

<sup>473</sup> Ibid.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid., 25 October, 1906, 4.

<sup>475</sup> Ibid., 1 November, 1906, 4.

<sup>476</sup> *Svenska Folkets Tidning*, 29 August, 1906, 6.

skeptical attitude toward Cole's candidacy and any attempt to impugn the governor. Two weeks before the election, the *SFT* ended its coy charade and came out in open support of Johnson. Only "independent" and "judicious" loyalty amounted to *true* loyalty to the party and its principles, the editorial argued.<sup>477</sup> Johnson's administration had been "just, beneficial, and richly fruitful," and preventing his re-election would be "the height of ingratitude and injustice."<sup>478</sup> And yet: "our party... is the Republican."<sup>479</sup> Even at the height of discontent, the faith of the fathers could not be completely abandoned. Swedish Republicans, while endorsing or voting for the Democratic governor's re-election, remained Republicans, but they were *conditional* Republicans whose votes could not be taken for granted.

Office	Republican	Democrat
Governor	96,162	168,480
Lt. Governor	137,864	106,926
Secretary of State	142,266	101,307
State Auditor	168,421	87,332
State Treasurer	153,746	92,450
Attorney General	169,908	85,154

Table 11. *Votes for major state offices in Minnesota, 1906.*<sup>480</sup>

Just like North Dakota, Minnesota had a "deviating" gubernatorial election in 1906. While Johnson triumphed over Cole, the North Star State returned Republican majorities for every other major state office. Most voters maintained their party affiliation

<sup>477</sup> Ibid., 24 October, 1906, 6.

<sup>478</sup> Ibid., 31 October, 1906, 6; 24 October, 6.

<sup>479</sup> Ibid., 24 October, 1906, 6.

<sup>480</sup> Election returns reported in *The Legislative Manual of the State of Minnesota. Compiled for the Legislature of 1907*, 484-487.



but nonetheless temporarily switched sides in large enough numbers to elect John Johnson. Subtracting the Democratic percentage of votes for attorney general from the Democratic percentage of votes for governor yields a rough, but reliable estimate of the magnitude of the independent or swing vote in each county. This measure will be referred to as the swing vote index, and Table 12 lists the ten Minnesota counties which scored highest on that measure in 1906, as well as the proportion of Scandinavians (Swedes and Norwegians) in the population of those counties.

Those counties where the greatest number of voters defected from the Republican Party in the gubernatorial election were counties with large Scandinavian populations; in fact, seven of them had a Scandinavian majority (Nicollet, the most prominent exception, was Johnson's home county). Voters in heavily Scandinavian counties were more likely to be conditional Republicans who voted for Johnson while rejecting other Democratic candidates. Those counties where the greatest number of voters defected from the Republican Party in the gubernatorial election were counties with large Scandinavian populations; in fact, seven of them had a Scandinavian majority (Nicollet, the most prominent exception, was Johnson's home county). Voters in heavily Scandinavian counties were more likely to be conditional Republicans who voted for Johnson while rejecting other Democratic candidates.

<b>County</b>	<b>Swing vote index</b>	<b>Scandinavians</b>
Grant	52.0	60.4
Kandiyohi	43.4	64.2
Nicollet	43.4	25.3
Chisago	42.9	69.2
Isanti	41.3	70.3
Swift	40.9	25.9
Kittson	40.8	72.7
Cottonwood	39.5	24.4
Lac qui Parle	39.3	53.0
Pope	38.8	60.5
<b>State total</b>	<b>27.5</b>	<b>26.0</b>

Table 12. *Top 10 swing-vote counties in Minnesota, and proportion of Scandinavians (%) in those counties, 1906.*

Table 13 provides regression estimates of the Democratic vote for governor and attorney general among the major nationalities in Minnesota. Although such estimates have to be treated as rough approximations, they nevertheless give some indication of the relationship between ethnicity and voting behavior. The vote for attorney general may be considered a proxy for the normal voting pattern in Minnesota, exposing the foundation of a permanent Republican majority in widespread old-stock support and almost unanimous Scandinavian backing.

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Democratic vote (%)</b>	
	<b>Governor</b>	<b>Attorney General</b>
Native stock	45	33
German	81	73
Swedish	63	12
Norwegian	54	4
<b>State total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>33</b>

Table 13. *Estimates of ethnic voting for governor and attorney general in Minnesota, 1906.*

Comparing the gubernatorial vote with this “normal” vote pattern puts on view the importance of conditional Republicanism, as well as its special significance for some ethnic groups. The “extra” Democratic votes cast by Germans and old-stock Americans were little more than one would reasonably expect a popular incumbent to receive. By contrast, the sharp shift in Scandinavian voting is remarkable. About half of all Scandinavian voters were Republicans who voted Democratic in the gubernatorial election, a defection large enough to decide the outcome in Johnson’s favor.

The fact that Norwegians were just as likely to switch sides as Swedes points to some larger affinity beyond the mere happenstance of ethnic resemblance. Even Swedes did not necessarily look upon Swedish candidates with special favor. Eberhart, the Swede elected lieutenant governor on the Republican ticket, did not do better in counties with many Swedes than elsewhere, when compared with other Republican candidates. Peter Magnusson, the Swedish Democrat running for secretary of state, did better than most fellow Democrats but much worse than John Johnson in Swedish-dominated counties such as Isanti, Chisago, and Kittson. Johnson’s appeal to fellow Scandinavians stemmed partly from ethnic sentiment, but had other sources as well. This becomes obvious when one considers that John Burke was not a Scandinavian at all, but an Irish Catholic.

The gubernatorial elections in North Dakota and Minnesota in 1906 were different in several respects. The Republicans in North Dakota split into two clearly defined and mutually hostile factions in a way that Minnesota Republicans did not. Minnesota Democrats had a popular incumbent candidate in John Johnson, whereas John Burke was at best a long shot. Nonetheless, the final outcomes and the causes of those outcomes were strikingly similar. In both cases, the elections were deviating rather than

realigning, with voters generally retaining their older party identities. The election victories hinged on independent voting by the otherwise very Republican Scandinavians, and the ethnic newspapers worked hard to develop low-level political theories that would justify voting for one party while still “belonging” to another. The concept of conditional republicanism is useful in understanding the political behavior of Scandinavian Americans and a crucial element in explaining why some very Republican states elected Democratic governors in the Progressive Era.

By 1912, Midwestern insurgents had reached a point of disillusion with Republican politics as the national level as well. Disappointed with President William Howard Taft, they hoped to replace him with Roosevelt on the Republican ticket. As one Minnesota newspaper editor put it, Roosevelt stood for “a truly representative and popular form of government” while Taft thought the “government [was] bound between the leather covers of law books.”<sup>481</sup> Turning the dichotomy on its head, a more conservative publication saw Taft as “a dutiful public servant fulfilling the law,” whereas Roosevelt had the “temper and training of a field marshal” and questionable “sobriety of [...] judgment.”<sup>482</sup>

At the extremely controversial Republican convention in June, the Taft faction used its control of the party organization to deny nomination of the considerably more popular Roosevelt. “Thou shalt not steal,” said the *Chicago Tribune* plainly, while in small-town Minnesota, the infuriated editor of the *Chisago County Press* more elaborately described the standpatters as “power-mad political libertines of special

---

<sup>481</sup> *Chisago County Press*, 22 February, 1912, 4; 7 March, 1.

<sup>482</sup> *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 16 January, 1912, 4; 20 January, 1912, 4; 25 January, 1912, 4.

privilege,” “reactionaries,” and “job-holders, land grabbers and tariff robbers.”<sup>483</sup>

Roosevelt decided to leave the Republican Party and create his own organization, known as the Progressive Party or simply the “Bull Moose.” Meanwhile, the Democrats nominated Woodrow Wilson of New Jersey.

At the national level, the Republican split ensured Wilson’s victory. With only 41.8 per cent of the popular vote he won forty states and 435 electoral votes. His vote in Minnesota was ten points lower, 31.8 per cent. Similarly, Bryan in 1908 had won 43.0 per cent nationwide and 33.1 per cent in Minnesota. The geographical distribution of Democratic support in Minnesota also closely matched the 1908 distribution, with a correlation of  $r = .87$  between the two.<sup>484</sup>

Whereas the strength and composition of Democratic support in Minnesota changed little from 1908 to 1912, the support for Republican candidate William H. Taft changed dramatically. From 59.3 per cent of the vote in 1908 he dropped over 40 points to 19.2 per cent in 1912. Furthermore, the geographical pattern of his support changed completely ( $r = -.19$ ). In other words, many counties with strong Republican traditions were among those which most firmly rejected Taft’s candidacy in 1912.<sup>485</sup>

The reason for Taft’s fiasco was primarily the decision of Roosevelt to run on the Progressive ticket. Although neither man was able to offer Wilson serious competition, Roosevelt did somewhat better than Taft nationally with 27.4 per cent to 23.2 per cent of the popular vote. However, in Minnesota Roosevelt was triumphant. With 125,856 votes

---

<sup>483</sup> John Allen Gable, *The Bull Moose Years: Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Party* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1978), 15; *Chisago County Press*, 27 June, 1912, 1; 18 July, 1912, 1.

<sup>484</sup> In calculating correlations with election years other than 1912, proportions of the major-party vote are used.

<sup>485</sup> In the five presidential elections immediately preceding the 1912 contest, the Republicans averaged 59.2 per cent of the vote in Minnesota. The total vote for Roosevelt and Taft in 1912 amounted to 56.9 per cent.

(37.7 per cent) to Wilson's 106,426 (31.8 percent), the Colonel dominated the state and carried sixty of the state's eighty-six counties. Wilson carried twenty-four counties, the Socialist Eugene Debs carried two, and the hapless Taft carried none. Roosevelt's margin over Taft, 18.5 points, was in fact the highest such margin in any state where both candidates were on the ballot. This gap points to the conditionality of Republican support in Minnesota. More specifically, it suggests that the success of a Republican candidate depended on being perceived as "progressive."

Statistical analysis is useful in order to explore the social origins of this distinct voting pattern, and particularly the ethnic roots of electoral support. Very simply put, the 1912 election resulted in a ranking of 1)Wilson, 2)Roosevelt, and 3)Taft at the national level, while it yielded a ranking of 1)Roosevelt, 2)Wilson, and 3)Taft in Minnesota. The former ranking will be called the "national pattern", the latter the "Minnesota pattern." Of the twenty-three counties with more than 20 per cent German population, twelve counties followed the national pattern and eleven followed the Minnesota pattern. This tendency to favor Wilson over Roosevelt was even more pronounced in counties with more than 25 per cent Germans, three-fourths (9/12) of which followed the national pattern while three followed the same pattern as the state totals.

This contrasts sharply with the results in the thirteen counties with more than 20 per cent Swedes. Most of these counties (eight) followed the Minnesota pattern, and none followed the national pattern. The remaining counties deviated from the state norm in that Debs finished first, second, or third. Roosevelt carried all counties with large Swedish populations, except Lake County, where he was beaten by Debs.

Counties with many Norwegians displayed a remarkable similarity to those with many Swedes. Roosevelt carried all twenty counties with more than 20 per cent Norwegian population. Fourteen followed the Minnesota pattern; five gave Debs second or third place, while Fillmore County gave Taft second and Wilson third place. In general, then, most counties with many Scandinavians followed the Minnesota pattern, none followed the national pattern, and deviations from the state norm were usually a result of the exceptional strength of the Socialist candidate. Of the 17 counties where the total Scandinavian (Swedish and Norwegian) population constituted more than 40 per cent of the total population, nine followed the Minnesota pattern, seven were carried by Roosevelt but included Debs in the top three, and one was carried by Debs.

Table 14 (showing the average vote for the four main candidates in the top ten counties with high proportions of Germans, Swedes, Norwegians, and Scandinavians, respectively) provides further evidence that suggests Swedish and Norwegian voting behavior converged with each other and diverged from that of the German element. Thus it makes sense once again to speak of a pattern of “Scandinavian” voting behavior.

	<b>Roosevelt</b>	<b>Wilson</b>	<b>Taft</b>	<b>Debs</b>
German	32.4	41.6	20.1	4.0
Swedish	45.1	22.2	15.0	12.1
Norwegian	48.7	23.0	13.8	11.7
Scandinavian	49.4	19.6	13.7	13.4
Minnesota	37.7	31.8	19.2	8.2
U.S.	27.4	41.8	23.2	6.0

Table 14. *Presidential election results, 1912, in 10 Minnesota counties with highest proportions of Germans, Swedes, Norwegians, and Scandinavians.*<sup>486</sup>

<sup>486</sup> For each group, the ten counties with the highest proportion of first and second generation immigrants of that group (in 1910) are used to calculate an average. The counties are: German: Carver, Winona, Sibley,

Scandinavian voters tended to support both the Progressive and the Socialist candidate in proportions well above the state and national averages. Indeed, there can be little doubt that Minnesota's reputation as a "third-party state" to a great extent derived from the voting behavior of the many Scandinavians in the state. In 1912, the two major party candidates obtained only 51 per cent of the Minnesota vote, compared to 65 per cent nationally. Only one state (Washington) in which both Wilson and Taft were on the ballot gave the two major party candidates a lower proportion of the votes. Tables 15 and 16 show the ten counties with the highest and lowest proportions of votes for the two major party candidates, and the proportion of Scandinavians in those counties.

County	Major party vote	Scandinavians
Scott	71.6	3.8
Stearns	69.3	4.7
Red Lake	68.2	20.9
Le Sueur	66.8	3.0
McLeod	65.4	2.3
Wabasha	64.9	5.8
Winona	64.2	3.5
Blue Earth	63.7	9.4
Carver	63.4	9.1
Hennepin	61.6	25.0

Table 15. *Ten Minnesota counties with the highest proportion of votes for major party candidates in the 1912 presidential election.*

---

Benton, McLeod, Stearns, Brown, Wabasha, Scott, Morrison; Swedish: Isanti, Chisago, Kanabec, Kittson, Meeker, Mille Lacs, Kandiyohi, Lake, Marshall, Douglas; Norwegian: Norman, Clearwater, Pennington, Pope, Laq qui Parle, Polk, Grant, Yellow Medicine, Clay, Roseau; Scandinavian: Isanti, Chisago, Norman, Kittson, Marshall, Clearwater, Kandiyohi, Pennington, Kanabec, Roseau. Percentages do not add up to 100 per cent, because there were more than four candidates.



County	Major party vote	Scandinavians
Clearwater	22.6	55.6
Cook	27.3	41.4
Lake	29.8	41.1
Isanti	29.9	67.5
Chisago	30.1	61.0
Roseau	30.1	51.2
Marshall	30.7	56.4
Grant	33.8	48.1
Carlton	35.3	26.7
Pennington	35.6	51.6

Table 16. *Ten Minnesota counties with the lowest proportion of votes for major party candidates in the 1912 presidential election.*

In eight of the ten counties with a high proportion of votes for the major parties, Scandinavians comprised less than 10 per cent of the population (table 15). Nine of the ten counties with a very low proportion of votes for the major parties had a more than 40 per cent Scandinavian population (table 16).<sup>487</sup>

Analyzing aggregate (county) data, rather than individual-level data (which are, of course, not available), poses some troubling methodological questions. What if the patterns established for heavily Scandinavian counties are simply spurious effects of other variables, such as economic structure, class, or region? To explore this possibility, two groups of counties which differed from each other on these variables but were

---

<sup>487</sup> Only three counties stand out as slightly inconsistent with this overwhelming tendency: Hennepin, Red Lake, and Carlton. All three, in fact, had special attributes that at least partially explain their divergence from the general pattern. Hennepin (Minneapolis) had both strong commercial interests and well-known political machines. Red Lake differed from all other Minnesota counties because the dominant ethnic group was the French Canadians, who had first settled the area in the late 1870s and remained more than 30 per cent of the population in 1910. Carlton County's Scandinavian population was only slightly above the state average, but the county also had a large Finnish-born population. The "Red Finns" were known for their radicalism. The Finnish Socialist Federation was an important part of the Socialist Party. Notably, as many as 20-25 per cent of Finnish immigrants to Minnesota were actually Swedish Finns. Timo Riippa, "The Finns and Swede-Finns", in Holmquist (ed.), *They Chose Minnesota*, pp. 308-311, 314.

internally similar were compared and contrasted. To ensure an element of randomization rather than investigator bias in the selection process, counties chosen were the ten all-rural counties with the highest and lowest score on the variable “crop value per capita”, developed from 1910 census data.<sup>488</sup> This procedure yields two distinct groups of counties: in the first group, relatively prosperous monocrop (wheat-growing) farming counties concentrated in western Minnesota, in the other, counties located in the north of the state and possessing only marginal conditions for commercial agriculture. Tables 17 and 18 show the distribution of electoral support for the main presidential candidates in these counties in 1912.

<b>County</b>	<b>Roosevelt</b>	<b>Wilson</b>	<b>Taft</b>	<b>Debs</b>	<b>Scandinavians</b>
Traverse	42.7	44.3	10.3	1.3	23.4
Stevens	38.2	38.9	17.4	2.0	22.3
Laq qui Parle	55.4	24.0	13.5	2.7	43.4
Wilkin	38.9	40.6	14.5	3.9	20.3
Big Stone	35.3	40.4	14.6	5.8	24.8
Kittson	53.1	25.0	12.8	5.5	56.4
Swift	39.7	35.9	16.9	3.8	36.6
Renville	44.0	33.7	18.1	2.5	21.5
Yellow Medicine	48.7	29.8	14.2	3.2	38.2
Redwood	40.7	35.5	17.1	4.4	9.4
<b>10-county avg. vote</b>	43.7	34.8	15.0	3.5	

Table 17. *1912 presidential election results in 10 all-rural Minnesota counties with highest per capita crop value.*

---

<sup>488</sup> “All rural” here simply means counties with no towns with populations over 2,500.

County	Roosevelt	Wilson	Taft	Debs	Scandinavians
Itasca	32.7	26.0	16.6	21.5	15.8
Cass	33.0	26.9	20.6	16.3	19.6
Beltrami	26.2	26.1	16.2	28.8	28.7
Koochiching	27.6	33.7	12.6	24.3	24.7
Aitkin	40.4	19.8	17.4	18.1	30.3
Cook	49.4	18.7	8.6	17.5	41.4
Mahnomen	24.6	46.9	10.9	15.7	12.4
Hubbard	29.7	26.6	21.2	16.8	16.7
Pine	41.3	26.4	17.4	11.7	27.5
Clearwater	51.7	11.2	11.4	21.4	55.6
<b>10-county avg. vote</b>	33.7	26.2	15.3	19.2	

Table 18. 1912 presidential election results in 10 all-rural Minnesota counties with lowest per capita crop value.

Several conclusions can be drawn from an analysis of the farm counties in table 17. Both the most conservative candidate (Taft) and the most radical candidate (Debs) fared poorly in these counties, consistently receiving less of the vote than their state and national totals in every single county. The pattern is one of “moderate progressivism.” Not surprisingly, farmers discontented with Taft’s tariff and trade policies were disinclined to vote for him, despite strong Republican traditions. Both Roosevelt and Wilson did better in these counties than in the state as a whole, but three counties stand out because they were exceptionally supportive of Roosevelt and gave Wilson a smaller share of the vote than his state total. If Laq qui Parle, Kittson, and Yellow Medicine are left out of the calculation, the averages for the remaining counties are almost the same for Roosevelt and Wilson (39.9 per cent and 38.4 per cent, respectively). These three counties were, significantly, the most heavily Scandinavian counties. In other words, even when counties with similar economic and social conditions are compared, a strong relationship remains between the Scandinavian presence and Roosevelt support.

The same pattern is evident in table 18: the 7.5 percentage point margin between Roosevelt and Wilson is reduced to 0.3 points simply by eliminating Cook and Clearwater, the two Scandinavian-dominated counties (the remaining eight counties average 29.4 per cent for Roosevelt, 29.1 for Wilson). In other words, Roosevelt's edge over Wilson, and more generally, his success in Minnesota, is best explained by reference to ethnicity. Another striking feature in table 8 is the strong support for Debs throughout all ten counties. Given the sharp contrast with table 17, it seems appropriate to link the Debs vote to specific socio-economic conditions.

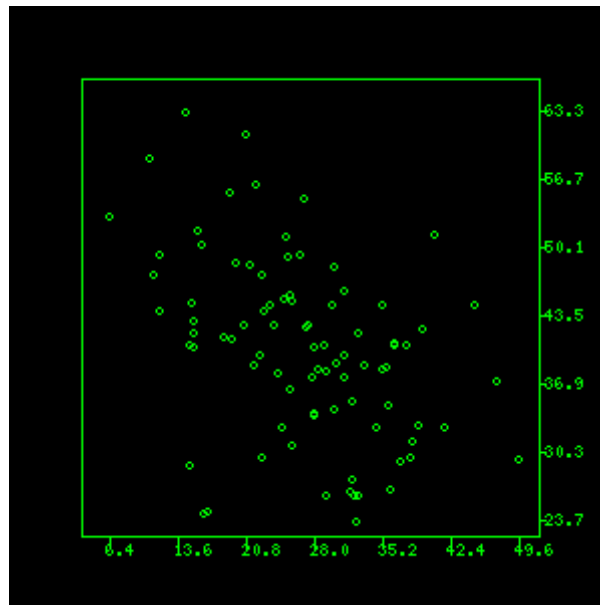


Figure 6. *Scatterplot of native-stock population and Roosevelt support in Minnesota counties, 1912 presidential election.*

*x = Native-stock population as a percentage of county population, 1910 census.*

*y = Roosevelt's share of the county vote, 1912 election.*

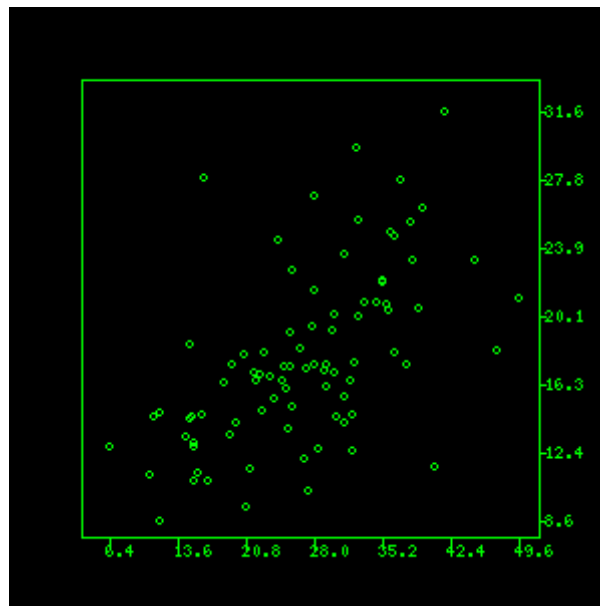


Figure 7. *Scatterplot of native-stock population and Taft support in Minnesota counties, 1912 presidential election.*

*x = Native-stock population as a percentage of county population, 1910 census.*

*y = Taft's share of the county vote, 1912 election.*

This analysis of the 1912 presidential contest in Minnesota does not support the common notion that progressivism was primarily the outlook of urban, professional, old-stock Americans. On the contrary, support of Roosevelt's candidacy in Minnesota seems to have been strongest among Scandinavians and farmers. Comparing the patterns of support for Roosevelt and Taft, it appears that conditional Republicanism separated progressive Scandinavian Republicans from the more moderate or conservative native-stock Republicans who were more likely to remain loyal to the party and to Taft. Figures 6 and 7 point toward a quite obvious conclusion about the voting behavior of old-stock Americans.

<b>County</b>	<b>Swing vote index</b>	<b>Native stock</b>
Appanoose	21.5	75.4
Van Buren	20.6	88.9
Warren	20.6	87.0
Jefferson	20.5	76.8
Henry	19.0	75.4
Page	18.7	74.4
Dallas	16.8	73.6
Delaware	14.2	59.4
Adams	14.1	74.9
Polk	13.4	63.6
<b>State total</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>58.6</b>

Table 19. *Top 10 swing-vote counties in Iowa, and proportion of native-born offspring of native-born parents in those counties (%), 1906.*

Nor was this an isolated case. When progressive Republican governor Albert B. Cummins ran for a third term in Iowa in 1906, the counties with large Swedish and Norwegian elements gave him almost unanimous support. By contrast, considerable numbers of old-stock Americans abandoned Cummins at the polls. In general, those counties with large proportions of native-stock voters were also the counties with the highest incidence of voting for the Democratic gubernatorial candidate by Republican partisans, as seen in Table 5.

In 1916, Woodrow Wilson carried seven of the ten most Scandinavian counties and came within 400 votes of being the first Democratic presidential candidate ever to carry Minnesota. At the same time, the progressive Swedish American governor, Republican Joseph Burnquist, beat his Democratic opponent by over 150,000 votes, a record margin of victory. For such superficially confusing electoral outcomes, the concept of conditional Republicanism offers at least a partial explanation. The findings of this chapter suggest that Scandinavians Americans in the Upper Midwest by the early

1900s had become more independent in their voting and less likely to retain their traditional loyalty to the Republican Party. This increasing independence, combined with a commitment to progressive ideals, had several important effects. Since German and native-stock Americans were more likely to stay loyal to the major parties, it is reasonable to conjecture that the direction of the Scandinavian vote was decisive in many elections. Because the ethnicity of the candidate still mattered, it became politically profitable for the parties to field Scandinavian candidates with progressive credentials. It should thus be unsurprising that the progressive Scandinavian office-holder, typically a Republican, became such a common type in the Midwest around this time. Retaining conditional Republicans within the party ranks served to maintain GOP supremacy, while progressives transformed the Republican Party in order to more vigorously confront twentieth-century realities.

This chapter has provided examples of how ethnic pride and identity sometimes tied into political identity, and how political mobilization or ethnically unique patterns of political behavior affected electoral outcomes and political development. Foreign-language newspapers allowed immigrants and second-generation members of immigrant language communities to participate in exciting debates about political parties, policy, and the often controversial relationship between ethnicity and politics. The voting booth allowed for simple answers to what could be complex questions. No one would argue that the case of Scandinavians in the early twentieth century represents the experience of all immigrants in the Midwest in the age of mass migration, but this chapter has suggested something of the richness and complexity of immigrant politics.

## CONCLUSION

Many studies have now been written about chain migration and the creation of homogenous immigrant settlements, but few have noted that many of the later chain migrants were shocked by the transformation of the speech, dress, and bearing of those who went before them. Even arriving among family members and former neighbors, Europeans often found odd practices and unfamiliar values. Some had abandoned religion altogether, others had joined strange sects. Many had embraced a new and more bourgeois lifestyle, facilitated by prosperity and less restrictive social mores. No longer subdued by landlords and harassed by petty officials (at least not as persistently as in Europe), the first immigrants had often been swept up in what was for better or worse a more democratic culture.

Historians have let their view of immigrants and their descendants be influenced too much by the most literate, prolific, and organization-minded among them, without closely examining the extent to which they were representative of immigrants in general. Especially among the first generation, many of those who most strongly resisted the adaptation to American circumstances were people of relatively high status, threatened by the leveling tendencies of rural America. Encouraging the maintenance of a distinctive ethnic identity among their countrymen might in some cases be their only way of retaining their own status, since their special skills and knowledge had little value in society at large. Similarly, the emerging commercial bourgeoisie among the immigrants had obvious reasons for fostering tightly knit ethnic communities. To this day, one hears rumors about Midwestern towns where none but those of the dominant ethnic group can succeed in business.



In addition, the stereotypes of nineteenth-century native-born Americans have a tendency to reappear in immigration history whenever they support the point the historian is trying to make. Scholars have realized for some time now that in the case of African Americans, Mexicans and Chicanos, and Asian immigrants, we need to understand what Anglo-whites said about those groups in the context of the prejudices the latter held and the purposes those served. It is strange that this insight has not yet been fully applied to the study of European immigrants. In this dissertation, I have consciously tried to avoid the question of what old-stock Americans thought about immigrants, and focused instead primarily on what immigrants thought about themselves. Similarly, I have generally avoided engaging fictional accounts of immigrant lives in the rural Midwest. Although these are rich sources, it is often too easy to be carried away by articulate writers who, it must be remembered, wrote first and foremost for artistic reasons and used stereotypes and people for the purposes of creating a plot or developing a character. Instead, I have delved into the often boring, quotidian, and offensive writings of the less articulate to try to get some sense of how such people experienced the migration process.

There has been some debate recently about whether or not rural history should be, first and foremost, the history of the expansion of capitalism and markets in the countryside. Although the idea of confining rural history to one single topic is rather silly, it is certainly possible to understand the history of immigration to the rural Midwest as defined to a considerable extent by encounters with capitalism and its consequences both in Europe and in America. Although many came to the United States to find better marriage prospects, avoid conscription, or serve God, the development of international capitalism helped create the circumstances which made migration possible and even

desirable for so many. Once in America, immigrants often produced long lists and explanations detailing the wages that could be made depending on occupation, gender, and language skills; the costs of land, livestock, and seasonal labor; or the prices of bread, butter, and bacon. They bragged shamelessly about the money they had made, the cows and pigs they owned, and the size of their farms. Even though immigrants in the rural Midwest thought Americans were too concerned with money, they certainly had other motivations than simple love of the land themselves. Many immigrants wanted to be wealthy and rise above others in status. Immigration historians, themselves often the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of immigrants, have been reluctant to admit these facts.

However, this dissertation has shown that immigrants' experiences in the rural Midwest were shaped by many factors other than capitalism narrowly construed. In their everyday lives, they encountered a new world of food. It was not possible to reconstruct the foodways of Europe on American soil, nor was it usually desirable. Similarly, migration forced European immigrants to confront new natural environments. They used their previous experiences and their learned notions about landscapes in these encounters, and often tried to establish some kind of continuity in their lives through place-making efforts that countered the stress of displacement. In the case of both food and landscape, immigrants reconsidered their own identities as well as their relationships with the outside world in light of new experiences.

In establishing their new identities in America, immigrants considered both their class and ethnic origins to determine who they were and what their place should be in society. Historians of immigration to the rural Midwest have usually been most interested

in the ethnic aspects. However, my findings suggest that we should learn from urban historians of immigration and place greater emphasis on class. Immigrants often found the differences in conceptions of class and status more remarkable than the ethnic diversity of the United States. Most of them admired the social order in the United States, and as the chapter on agriculture demonstrates, they also adopted technology and work habits deemed appropriate to the American context, and participated fully in the market economy.

Male immigrants participated in politics as well. In some cases, immigrant groups mobilized to serve their own purposes, independent of party machines. Immigrants and their offspring were often elected to high political office, although some groups were more proportionately represented than others. In this context, too, class played at least as great a role as ethnicity. Within each ethnic group, the wealthiest and best connected men were the most likely to dominate public discourse and be elected to office.

The aim of this dissertation has primarily been to contribute within the fields of immigration and rural history. Nonetheless, it is tempting to ask whether these findings have any implications for our understanding of the Midwest as a region. For the last thirty or forty years, it has been considered the duty of immigration historians and all other American historians to “celebrate diversity” and to point it out wherever it can be found or imagined. It is maybe somewhat disappointing, then, that this study suggests that there in some ways was rather less diversity in the rural Midwest than previously thought. Whenever ethnicity came into play in encounters between people, class, gender, age, and life history usually mattered as well. Although different ethnic groups certainly built their own churches, lodges, and colleges, and they often disliked, despised, or hated other

people, they were in some respects not all that different. The republic, the land laws, the corn and wheat, the railroad, the general store and the country school; the pork and pie, the prairies and plains, the simple houses and the easy sociability, these things more than where people came from defined everyday life in the rural Midwest.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### *Primary sources (unpublished)*

Becker, John. Papers. Max Kade Institute, Madison, Wisconsin.

Birkeland, Ole Andreas Olsen. *Autobiography*. Unpublished. Wisconsin Historical Society (henceforth WHS), Madison.

Densmore, Jack. *The Life of Phillip Jacob Maurer*. Unpublished, 1992. Max Kade Institute.

Friend, Mrs. Interview, *Ethnic History of Wisconsin Project*. WHS.

Frost, Alfred. *Autobiography*. Withee, Wisc.: unpublished, 1981. Danish Immigrant Archives (henceforth DIA), Grand View College, Des Moines, Iowa.

Frost, Peter. *The Life History of Peter and Anne Frost*. Unpublished, 1924. DIA.

Hansen, Christian. *Da jeg kom til Minnesota*. Tyler, Minn.: unpublished, 1927. DIA.

Hansen, Niels. Letters. DIA.

Jensen, Jens Peter. *Minder*. Junction City, Ore: unpublished, 1934. DIA.

Jorgensen, J. *Danskerne i Turner County, South Dakota*. Unpublished. DIA.

Jørgensen, Jørgen. *Lifserindringer*. Unpublished. DIA.

Jørgensen, Rasmus. *Diary*. DIA.

Junker, Caroline. *Diary*. DIA.

Kerl, Otto. *58 Years in Dane County*. Unpublished, 1905. WHS.

Kjems, Hjalmar. *Mit liv*. Unpublished. DIA.

Lange, Olof. *Strödda minner*. Unpublished, Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center (henceforth SSIRC), Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois.

Larson, Anna. *Mom's Letters Home*, edited and translated by Esther Larson. Unpublished, 1971. SSIRC.

Laursen, L. C. *Papers*. DIA.

Liljeholm, J. E. *Anteckningar under en af mig företagen resa til Norra Amerika och vistandet derstädes under 4 år*. Unpublished, SSIRC.

Maretich, Peter. Interview, *Ethnic History of Wisconsin Project*. WHS.

Messerschmidt, William Henry. *Autobiographical notes*. Unpublished, 1926. WHS.

Meyer, Oscar E. Interview, *Ethnic History of Wisconsin Project*. WHS.

Møller, Andrew. *Fortelling af en Dansk Amerikaner*. Unpublished. DIA.

Neal, Robert. Interview, *Ethnic History of Wisconsin Project*. WHS.

Pierson, Anders. Day journal. SSIRC.

Rungborg, Niels Sørensen. *Autobiography*. Unpublished. DIA.

Schilling, George Frederick. *Erinnerungen*. Almond, Wisc.: unpublished, 1906. WHS.

Smith, Peter J. *Memories of the Life of Peter J. Smith*. Eau Claire, Wisc.: unpublished, n.d. WHS.

*Primary sources (published)*

Abbott, John, ed., and Raymond Spahn, trans. *Journey to New Switzerland: Travel Account of the Koepfli and Suppiger Family to St. Louis on the Mississippi and the Founding of New Switzerland in the State of Illinois*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987.

*Amerikabrev fra Norsk Utvandremuseum*. Collection of America letters published online, [http://www.nb.no/emigrasjon/brev\\_oversikt\\_forfatter.php](http://www.nb.no/emigrasjon/brev_oversikt_forfatter.php).

*Bismarck Tribune*.

Blegen, Theodore, ed. *Land of Their Choice: The Immigrants Write Home*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955.

Blegen, Theodore, ed. *Frontier Parsonage: The Letters of Olaus Fredrik Duus, Norwegian Pastor in Wisconsin, 1855 – 1858*. Northfield, Minn.: Norwegian American Historical Association, 1947.

Bowen, Ralph H., ed. and trans.. *A Frontier Family in Minnesota: Letters of Theodore and Sophie Bost, 1851 – 1920*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981.

*Chisago County Press*. Lindstrom, Minnesota.



Eide, Richard B., ed. and trans. *Norse Immigrant Letters: Glimpses of Norse Immigrant Life in the Northwest in the Fifties*. Minneapolis: Lutheran Free Church Publ. Co., 1925.

*Fargo Forum*.

*Fourteenth Census of the United States: Population, 1920*. Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1921.

*Fram*. Fargo, North Dakota.

Frank, Louis F. *Pionierjahre der Deutsch-Amerikanischen Familien Frank-Kerler in Wisconsin und Michigan, 1849 – 1864*. Milwaukee, Wisc.: L. F. Frank, 1911.

Frenz, Alice, et al., ed. *Freistadt and the Lutheran Immigration*. Mequon, Wisc.: Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church of Freistadt, 1998.

*Grand Forks Herald*.

*Grand Forks Times*.

Grove-Rasmussen, A. C. L. *Rejseberetning*. Odense: Udvalget for evangelisk forkyndelse blandt landsmænd i Amerika, 1871.

Hale, Frederick, ed.. *Danes in North America*..Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984.

Hansson, Sven. *Lefnadsteckning på vers och prosa*. Ronneby: Ronneby Hembygdförening, 2003.

Helbich, Wolfgang, ed. “*Amerika ist ein freies land....*” *Auswanderer schreiben nach Deutschland*. Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1985.

Herder, Hans. *Hessisches Auswandererbuch: Berichte, Chroniken und Dokumente zur Geschichte hessischer Einwanderer in den Vereinigten Staaten, 1683 – 1983*. Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1983.

Hoflund, Charles. *Getting Ahead: A Swedish Immigrant's Reminiscences, 1834 – 1887*, edited by H. Arnold Barton. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989.

Holtmann, Antonius, ed. “*Ferner thue ich euch zu wissen*”: *Briefe des Johann Heinrich zur Oeveste aus Amerika (1834 – 1876)*. Bremen: Edition Temmen, 1995.

*Iowa Staats-Anzeiger*. Des Moines.

Johansen, Frederikke. *Fredelund: Skildringer fra Nybyggertiden*. Askov, Minn.: American Publishing Co., n.d.

Kammeier, Heinz-Ulrich. *“Ach, wie schön ist es in diesem gelobten Amerika”:  
Auswandererbriefe aus dem Kreis Lübbecke und Umgebung 1890 – 1952.* Espelkamp:  
Verlag Marie Leidorf, 1995.

Kamphoefner, Walter D., et al., ed. *News from the Land of Freedom: German  
Immigrants Write Home.* Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991.

Kronenberg, Kenneth, ed. and trans. *Lives and Letters of an Immigrant Family: The van  
Dreveldt’s Experiences along the Missouri, 1844 – 1866.* Lincoln: University of  
Nebraska Press, 1998.

*Legislative Manual.* Bismarck: North Dakota Dept. of State, 1907.

*Legislative Manual of the State of Minnesota.* St. Paul: Minnesota Dept. of State, 1891 –  
1921.

Lucas, Henry, ed. *Dutch Immigrant Memoirs and Related Writings.* Revised edition.  
Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1997.

Mattson, Hans. *Reminiscences: The Story of an Emigrant.* St. Paul: D. D. Merrill, 1891.

*Minneapolis Morning Tribune.*

*Minneapolis Tidende.*

*Minnesota Stats Tidning.* Minneapolis.

Munch, Helene, and Peter A. Munch, trans. *The Strange American Way: Letters of Cajo Munch from Wiot, Wisconsin, 1855 – 1859.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970.

*Normanden.* Grand Forks, North Dakota.

*Rothuggaren.* Litchfield, Minnesota.

Schelbert, L., and H. Rappolt, ed. *Alles ist ganz anders hier: Auswandererschicksale in Briefen aus zwei Jahrhunderten.* Olten: Walter-Verlag, 1977.

Schroeder, A., and C. Schulz-Geisberg, ed. *Hold Dear, As Always: Jette, A German Immigrant Life in Letters.* Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1988.

Stellingwerff, J., comp., R. Swierenga, ed., and W. Lagerwey, trans. *Iowa Letters: Dutch Immigrants on the American Frontier.* Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing, 2004.

*Svenska Amerikanska Posten.* Minneapolis.

*Svenska Folkets Tidning*. St. Paul.

Swanson, Anna Svensson. *Orphan, Immigrant, Prairie Pioneer: Memories of My Life*, edited by M. Carol & L. Evenson. S. n., 1989.

Vandergon, Gertrude Braat. *Our Pioneer Days in Minnesota*. Holland, Mich.: Holland Letter Service, 1949.

Warnander, Jessica, ed. *Tre Bröder – Ett Amerika*. Mjölby: Atremi, 2005.

White, Bruce M., et al., comp. *Minnesota Votes: Election Returns by County for Presidents, Senators, Congressmen, and Governors, 1857 – 1977*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1977.

*Wishek* (N. D.) *News*.

Yessen, Boy. *Fra Slesvig til Nebraska, En Dansk Udvandrerers Oplevelser under tre Flag*. Copenhagen: Gyldendalske, 1952.

Zempel, Solveig. *In Their Own Words: Letters from Norwegian Immigrants*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991.

*Secondary sources*

Abernathy, Thomas Perkins. *From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1932.

Adams, Jane. *The Transformation of Rural Life: Southern Illinois, 1890 – 1990*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994.

Alba, Richard D. *Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of White America*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Second ed. New York: Verso, 1991.

Anderson, E. N. *Everyone Eats: Understanding Food and Culture*. New York: New York University Press, 2005.

Appadurai, Arjun. "Gastro-Politics in Hindu South Asia." *American Ethnologist* 8 (1981): 494-511.

Appleton, Jay. *The Experience of Landscape*. New York: Wiley, 1996.

Atack, J., and F. Bateman. *To Their Own Soil: Agriculture in the Antebellum North*. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1987.

Axelsson, M. L., and D. Brinberg. *A Social-Psychological Perspective on Food-Related Behavior*. New York: Springer-Verlag, 1989.

Backhaus, Gary. "Introduction," in *Tensional Landscapes: The Dynamics of Boundaries and Placements*, edited by G. Backhaus and J. Murungi, xi-xxix. Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2003.

Bade, Klaus. *Migration in European History*. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2003.

Baines, Dudley. *Emigration from Europe, 1815 – 1930*. London: Macmillan, 1991.

Barber, Benjamin. "How Swiss is Rousseau?" *Political Theory* 13 (1985): 475-495.

Barth, Fredrik. "Introduction," in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, edited by Barth. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1969.

Barthes, Roland. "Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption," in *European Diet from Pre-Industrial to Modern Times*, edited by Elborg Forster and Robert Forster. New York: Harper & Row, 1975.

Bayly, C. A. *The Birth of the Modern World: 1780 – 1914*. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2003.

Beardsworth, A., and T. Keil. *Sociology on the Menu: An Invitation to the Study of Food and Society*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Berthrong, John. "Confucian Views of Nature," in *Nature Across Cultures: Views of Nature and the Environment in Non-Western Cultures*, edited by Helaine Selin, 373-392. Boston, Mass.: Kluwer Academic, 2003.

Birch, A. H. *Representation*. New York: Praeger, 1972.

Birch, L. L., and J. A. Fisher. "The Role of Experience in the Development of Children's Eating Behavior," in *Why We Eat What We Eat: The Psychology of Eating*, edited by Elizabeth D. Capaldi, 113-141. Washington, D. C.: American Psychological Association, 1996.

Blaschke, Monika. "No Way but Out: German Women in Mecklenburg," in *Peasant Maids – City Women: From the European Countryside to Urban America*, ed. Christiane Harzig, 25-56.. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997.

Blumin, Stuart. "Residential and Occupational Mobility in Antebellum Philadelphia," in *Three Centuries of Social Mobility in America*, edited by Edward Pessen, . Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1974.



Bodnar, John. *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America*.

Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.

Bogue, Allan. *From Prairie to Corn Belt. Farming on the Illinois and Iowa Prairies in the Nineteenth Century*. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1994 [1963].

Bolton, S. Charles. *Territorial Ambition: Land and Society in Arkansas, 1800 – 1840*.

Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1993.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge,

Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984.

Brady, Emily. *Aesthetics of the Natural Environment*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003.

Brass, Paul. *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison*. Newbury Park, Cal.:

Sage, 1991.

Braudel, Fernand. *Civilization and Capitalism, 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Century, Vol. 1: The Structures of Everyday Life: The Limits of the Possible*. Translated by Sian Reynolds. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992 [1979].

Bronner, Simon J. "The Idea of the Folk Artifact," in *American Material Culture and Folklife: A Prologue and Dialogue*, edited by Bronner, 3-39. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Research Press, 1985.

Brown, L. K., and K. Mussell, "Introduction," in *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States: The Performance of Group Identity*, edited by L. K. Brown and K. Mussell. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984.

Burnham, Walter Dean. *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics*. New York: Norton, 1970.

Camp, Charles. "Foodways in Everyday Life." *American Quarterly* 34 (1982): 278-289.

Campbell, Angus, et al. *The American Voter*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1960.

Capaldi, Elizabeth D. "Introduction," in *Why We Eat What We Eat: The Psychology of Eating*, edited by Elizabeth D. Capaldi, 3-9. Washington, D. C.: American Psychological Association, 1996.

Capaldi, Elizabeth D. "Conditioned Food Preferences," in *Why We Eat What We Eat: The Psychology of Eating*, edited by Elizabeth D. Capaldi, 53-80. Washington, D. C.: American Psychological Association, 1996.

Carlsson, Sten. *Skandinaviske politiker i Minnesota. En studie rörande den etniska faktorns roll vid politiska val i en immigrantstat*. Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1970.

Charlton, D. G. *New Images of the Natural in France: A Study in European Cultural History, 1750 – 1800*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

Chrislock, Carl H. *The Progressive Era in Minnesota*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1971.

Cicc, Marc. "The Political Ecology of the Rhine," in *Nature in German History*, edited by Christof Mauch, 31-47. New York: Berghahn Books, 2004.

Cinotto, Simone. "Leonardo Covello, the Covello Papers, and the History of Eating Habits among Italian Immigrants in New York." *Journal of American History* 91 (2004): 497-521.

Clayton, S., and S. Opatow, "Introduction," in *Identity and the Natural Environment: The Psychological Significance of Nature*, edited by S. Clayton & S. Opatow, 1-24. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003.

Coburn, Carol K. *Life at Four Corners: Religion, Gender, and Education in a German-Lutheran Community, 1868 – 1945*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992.

Cogswell, Seddie, Jr. *Tenure, Nativity and Age as Factors in Iowa Agriculture, 1850 – 1880*. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1975.

Conner, M., and C. Armitage. *The Social Psychology of Food*. Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2002.

Conzen, Kathleen Neils, et al. "The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the U. S. A." *Journal of American Ethnic History* 12 (1992): 3-41.

Cordona, Euridice Charon. "Re-Encountering Cuban Tastes in Australia." *Australian Journal of Anthropology* 15 (2004): 40-53.

Counihan, C., and P. Van Esterik. "Introduction," in *Food and Culture: A Reader*, edited by C. Counihan and P. Van Esterik, 1-7. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Curti, Merle. *The Making of an American Community: A Case Study of Democracy in a Frontier County*. Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1959.

Daniel. T. & J. Vining, "Methodological Issues in the Assessment of Landscape Quality," in *Behavior and the Natural Environment*, edited by I. Altman and J. Wohlwill, 39-84. New York: Plenum Press, 1983.

Daniels, Stephen. *Fields of Vision: Landscape Imagery and National Identity in England and the United States*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993.

De Vos, George A. "Conflict, Dominance, and Exploitation: The Sacred and Expressive in Systems of Social Segregation," in G. A. De Vos and M. Suarez-Orozco, *Status Inequality: The Self in Culture*. Newbury Park, Cal.: Sage, 1990.

De Vos, "Self in Society: A Multilevel, Psychocultural Analysis," in G. A. De Vos and M. Suarez-Orozco, *Status Inequality: The Self in Culture*. Newbury Park, Cal.: Sage, 1990.

Diggs, B. J. "Practical Representation," in *Representation*, edited by J. R. Pennock and J. W. Chapman. New York: Atherton Press, 1968.

Diner, Hasia R. *Hungering for America: Italian, Irish, and Jewish Foodways in the Age of Migration*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Douglas, Mary. "Deciphering a Meal," in *Food and Culture: A Reader*, edited by C. Counihan and P. Van Esterik, 36-54. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Douglas, Mary. "Standard Social Uses of Food: Introduction," in *Food in the Social Order: Studies of Food and Festivities in Three American Communities*, edited by Mary Douglas. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1984.

Douglas, Mary. *In the Active Voice*. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982.

Dreese, Donelle N. *Ecocriticism. Creating Self and Place in Environmental and American Indian Literatures*. New York: Peter Lang, 2002.

Dunlap, Thomas R. "Creation and Destruction in Landscapes of Empire," in *City, Country, Empire: Landscapes in Environmental History*, edited by J. M. Diefendorf and K. Doney, 207-225. Pittsburgh, Penn.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005.

Ellen, Roy. "Variation and Uniformity in the Construction of Biological Knowledge Across Cultures," in *Nature Across Cultures: Views of Nature and the Environment in Non-Western Cultures*, edited by Helaine Selin. Boston, Mass.: Kluwer Academic, 2003.

Ely, Christopher. *This Meager Nature: Landscape and National Identity in Imperial Russia*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002.

Essemyr, Mats. "Nutritional Needs and Social Esteem: Two Aspects of Diet in Sweden during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries," in *European Food History: A Research Review*, edited by Hans J. Teuterberg, 256-277. New York: Leicester University Press, 1992.

Ewing, G. O. "Environmental and Spatial Preferences of Interstate Migrants in the United States," in *Spatial Choice and Spatial Behavior: Geographic Essays on the Analysis of*

*Preferences and Perceptions*, edited by R. Golledge & G. Rushton. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1976.

Fink, Deborah. *Agrarian Women: Wives and Mothers in Rural Nebraska, 1880 – 1940*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992.

Fink, Deborah. *Open Country, Iowa: Rural Women, Tradition and Change*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986.

Fiorina, Morris P. *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.

Fischler, Claude. "Food, Self, and Identity." *Social Science Information* 27 (1988): 275-292.

Fussell, Paul. *Class: A Guide through the American Status System*. New York: Summit Books, 1983.

Gabaccia, Donna. "Ins and Outs: Who is an Immigrant Historian?" *Journal of American Ethnic History* 18 (1999): 126-135.

Gabaccia, Donna R. *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Gable, John Allen. *The Bull Moose Years: Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Party*. Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1978.

Galef, Bennett G., Jr., "Social Influences on Food Preference and Feeding Behaviors of Vertebrates," in *Why We Eat What We Eat: The Psychology of Eating*, edited by Elizabeth D. Capaldi. Washington, D. C.: American Psychological Association, 1996, 207-231.

Gates, Paul. *Landlords and Tenancy on the Prairie Frontier. Studies in American Land Policy*. Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1973.

Gellner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1983.

George, Larry. *A Sermon in the Desert: Belief and Behavior in Early St. George, Utah*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988.

Gjerde, Jon. "New Growth on Old Vines – The State of the Field: The Social History of Immigration to and Ethnicity in the United States." *Journal of American Ethnic History* 18 (1999): 40-65.

Gjerde, Jon. *The Minds of the West. Ethnocultural Evolution in the Rural Middle West, 1830 – 1917*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.



Gjerde, Jon. *From Peasants to Farmers. The Migration from Balestrand, Norway, to the Upper Middle West*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Glaab, Charles N. "John Burke and the Progressive Revolt," in *The North Dakota Political Tradition*, edited by Thomas Howard. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1981.

Glacken, Clarence. "Reflections on the History of Western Attitudes to Nature," in *Nature and Identity in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, edited by A. Buttimer & L. Wallin, 1-17. Boston, Mass.: Kluwer, 1999.

Goode, Judith, et al., "A Framework for the Analysis of Continuity and Change in Shared Sociocultural Rules for Food Use: The Italian-American Pattern," in *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States: The Performance of Group Identity*, edited by L. K. Brown and K. Mussell, 66-88. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984.

Goody, Jack. *Cooking, Cuisine, and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Govers, C., and H. Vermeulen, "From Political Mobilization to the Politics of Consciousness," in *The Politics of Ethnic Consciousness*, edited by Govers & Vermeulen. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997.

Handlin, Oscar. *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1951.

Hannan, Kevin. "Refashioning Ethnicity in Czech-Moravian Texas." *Journal of American Ethnic History* 25 (2005): 31-60.

Hartig, T., and G. Evans, "Psychological Foundations of Nature Experience," in *Behavior and Environment: Psychological and Geographical Approaches*, ed. T. Garling & R. Golledge, 427-457. New York: Elsevier Science, 1993.

Haury, David A. "German-Russian Immigrants to Kansas and American Politics." *Kansas History*, 3 (1980): 226-237.

Hecht, Anat. "Home Sweet Home: Tangible Memories of an Uprooted Childhood," in *Material Culture behind Closed Doors*, ed. Daniel Miller, 123-145. New York: Berg, 2001.

Heimstra, N., and L. McFarling. *Environmental Psychology*. Monterey, Cal.: Brooks/Cole Publ. Co., 1974.

Higbie, Frank Tobias. *Indispensable Outcasts. Hobo Workers and Community in the American Midwest, 1880 – 1930*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003.

Higham, John. *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860 – 1925*. New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1955.

Hobsbawm, Eric. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Hobsbawm, E., and T. Ranger, ed., *The Invention of Tradition*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Hoerder, Dirk. “From Dreams to Possibilities: The Secularization of Hope and the Quest for Independence,” in D. Hoerder & H. Rössler, *Distant Magnets: Expectations and Realities in the Immigrant Experience, 1840 – 1930*, 1-32. New York: Holmes & Meier, 1993.

Holsinger, Elizabeth. *Rural Scenes and National Representation: Britain, 1815 – 1850*. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1997.

Honour, Hugh. *Romanticism*. London: Allen Lane, 1979.

Ittelson, William H., et al., *An Introduction to Environmental Psychology*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1974.

Ittelson, William H. "Environment Perception and Contemporary Perceptual Theory," in *Environment and Cognition*, ed. William H. Ittelson, 1-19. New York: Seminar Press, 1973.

Jacobson, Matthew Frye. *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Jordan, Terry. *German Seed in Texas Soil: Immigrant Farmers in Nineteenth-Century Texas*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966.

Kahn, Peter H., Jr., *The Human Relationship with Nature: Development and Culture*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999.

Kalcik, Susan. "Ethnic Foodways in America: Symbol and the Performance of Identity," in *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States: The Performance of Group Identity*, edited by L. K. Brown and K. Mussell. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984.

Kamphoefner, Walter. *The Westfalians. From Germany to Missouri*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.

Karlström, Urban. *Economic Growth and Migration during the Industrialization of Sweden: A General Equilibrium Approach*. Stockholm: Stockholm School of Economics, 1985.

Kaplan, R., and S. Kaplan, *The Experience of Nature: A Psychological Perspective*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Kaplan, Steven L. "Breadways." *Food & Foodways* 7 (1997): 1-44.

Keyes, Charles F. "The Dialectics of Ethnic Change," in *Ethnic Change*, edited by Keyes. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981.

Keyes, Charles F. "Introduction," in *Ethnic Adaption and Identity: The Karen of the Thai Frontier with Burma*, edited by Keyes. Philadelphia: Institute of the Study of Human Issues, 1979.

Khare, R. S., and M. S. A. Rao. "Introduction," in *Food, Society, and Culture*, edited by Khare and Rao, 1-18. Durham, N. C.: Carolina Academic Press, 1986.

Kittler, P. G., and K. Sucher, *Food and Culture in America: A Nutrition Handbook*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1989.

Kjaer, Ulrik. "Representativeness and Local Politics in Denmark," in *Representation and Community in Western Democracies*, edited by Nirmala Rao. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.

Kleinschmidt, Harald. *People on the Move: Attitudes toward and Perceptions of Migration in Medieval and Modern Europe*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2003.

Kleppner, Paul. *Continuity and Change in Electoral Politics, 1893 – 1928*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1987.

Kleppner, Paul. *Who Voted? The Dynamics of Electoral Turnout, 1870 – 1980*. New York: Praeger, 1982.

Kleppner, Paul. *The Cross of Culture: A Social Analysis of Midwestern Politics, 1850-1900*. New York: The Free Press, 1970.

Kohn, Hans. *Prelude to Nation-States: The French and German Experience, 1789 – 1815*. Princeton, N. J.: Van Nostrand, 1967.

Labbe, Jaqueline M. *Romantic Visualities: Landscape, Gender and Romanticism*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998.

Lahlum, Lori Ann. "*There Are No Trees Here:*" *Norwegian Women Encounter the Northern Prairies and Plains*. Unpublished dissertation, University of Idaho, 2003.

Lass, William. *Minnesota: A History*. New York: Norton, 1998.

Lee, Terence. *Psychology and the Environment*. London: Methuen, 1976.

Levenstein, Harvey. *Paradox of Plenty: The Social History of Eating in Modern America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Levenstein, Harvey. *Revolution at the Table: The Transformation of the American Diet*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Levi-Strauss, Claude. "The Culinary Triangle," in *Food and Culture: A Reader*, edited by C. Counihan and P. Van Esterik, 28-35. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Levi-Strauss, Claude. *The Origin of Table Manners*. Translated by J. Weightman and D. Weightman. New York: Harper & Row, 1978.

Levi-Strauss, Claude. *From Honey to Ashes*. Translated by J. Weightman and D. Weightman. New York: Harper & Row, 1973.

Levi-Strauss, Claude. *The Raw and the Cooked*. Translated by J. Weightman and D. Weightman. New York: Harper & Row, 1967.

Levi-Strauss, Claude. *Structural Anthropology*. Translated by C. Jacobsen and B. G. Schoepf. New York: Basic Books, 1963.

Loewen, Royden. *Hidden Worlds: Revisiting the Mennonite Migrants of the 1870s*. North Newton, Kan.: Bethel College, 2001.

Logue, A. W. *The Psychology of Eating and Drinking: An Introduction*, second ed. New York: W. H. Freeman, 1991.

Lott, B., and H. E. Bulloch. *Psychology and Economic Injustice: Personal, Professional, and Political Intersections*. Washington, D. C.: American Psychological Association, 2007.

Lovoll, Odd. *The Promise Fulfilled: A Portrait of Norwegian Americans Today*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.

Luutz, Wolfgang. "Spatial Boundaries – Spatial Visions: The Case of Saxony," in *Tensional Landscapes: The Dynamics of Boundaries and Placements*, edited by G. Backhaus and J. Murungi. Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2003.



Lyman, Bernard. *A Psychology of Food: More than a Matter of Taste*. New York: Van Nostrand, 1989.

Manin, Bernard. *The Principles of Representative Government*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Mankekar, Purnima. "'India Shopping:' Indian Grocery Stores and Transnational Configurations of Belonging," in *The Cultural Politics of Food and Eating*, edited by J. L. Watson and M. Caldwell, 197-214. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2005.

Mansbridge, Jane. "What does a Representative Do? Descriptive Representation in Communicative Settings of Distrust, Uncrystallized Interests, and Historically Denigrated Status," in *Citizenship in Diverse Societies*, edited by W. Kymlicka and W. Norman. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Marcoux, Jean-Sebastien. "The Refurbishment of Memory," in *Material Culture behind Closed Doors*, ed. Daniel Miller, 69-86. New York: Berg, 2001.

Masuoka, Jitsuichi. "Changing Food Habits of the Japanese in Hawaii." *American Sociological Review* 10 (1945): 759-765.

Mauch, Christof. "Introduction: Nature and Nation in Transatlantic Perspective," in *Nature in German History*, edited by Christof Mauch, 1-9. New York: Berghahn Books, 2004.

McIntosh, Wm. Alex. *Sociologies of Food and Nutrition*. New York: Plenum Press, 1996.

McQuillan, D. Aidan. *Prevailing over Time: Ethnic Adjustment on the Kansas Prairies, 1875 – 1925*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990.

McWilliams, Mark. "Distant Tables: Food and the Novel in Early America." *Early American Literature* 38 (2003): 365-393.

Meigs, Anna. "Food as Cultural Construction," *Food and Culture: A Reader*, edited by C. Counihan and P. Van Esterik, 95-106. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Mennell, Stephen. "Divergences and Convergences in the Development of Culinary Cultures," in *European Food History: A Research Review*, edited by Hans J. Teuteberg, 278-288. New York: Leicester University Press, 1992.

Mennell, Stephen. *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present*. New York: Blackwell, 1985.

Mennella, J. A., and G. K. Beauchamp, "The Early Development of Human Flavor Preferences," in *Why We Eat What We Eat: The Psychology of Eating*, edited by Elizabeth D. Capaldi, 83-112. Washington, D. C.: American Psychological Association, 1996.

Miller, Angela. *Landscape Representation and American Cultural Politics, 1825 – 1875*. Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993.

Miner, Horace. *Culture and Agriculture. An Anthropological Study of a Corn Belt County*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1949.

Moran, Emilio F. *Human Adaptability: An Introduction to Ecological Anthropology*. Belmont, Cal.: Wadsworth, 1979.

Morin, F., and B. Saladin d'Anglure. "Ethnicity as a Political Tool for Indigenous Peoples," in *The Politics of Ethnic Consciousness*, edited by C. Govers and H. Vermeulen. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997.

Morrison, John. *Identity and Nationalism in Scottish Painting, 1800 – 1920*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003.

Mulvey, Christopher. *Anglo-American Landscapes: A Study of Nineteenth-Century Anglo-American Travel Literature*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Nagata, Judith. "In Defense of Ethnic Boundaries: The Changing Myths and Charters of Malay Identity," in *Ethnic Change*, edited by Charles F. Keyes. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981.

Nakamura, Hajime. "Ideas of Nature in East Asian Lands," in *Nature and Identity in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, edited by A. Buttner & L. Wallin, 19-49. Boston, Mass.: Kluwer, 1999.

Nugent, Walter. *Crossings: The Great Transatlantic Migration, 1871 – 1914*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992.

Ostergren, Robert C. *A Community Transplanted. The Trans-Atlantic Experience of a Swedish Immigrant Settlement in the Upper Middle West, 1835 – 1915*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988.

Patterson, Orlando. "Context and Choice in Ethnic Allegiance: A Theoretical Framework and Caribbean Case Study," in *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, edited by N. Glazer and D. P. Moynihan. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975.

Paul, Roland. "Ihr kent euch kein bekrif machen wis in Amerika ist: Briefe Pfälzischer Auswanderer und ihre Bedeutung für die Forschung," in *Die Auswanderung nach Nordamerika aus den Regionen des heutigen Rheinland-Pfalz*, edited by W. Kremp & R. Paul, 49-63. Trier: WVT, 2002.

Pederson, Jane Marie. *Between Memory and Reality: Family and Community in Rural Wisconsin, 1870 – 1970*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992.

Pessen, Edward. *Riches, Class, and Power Before the Civil War*. Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1973.

Phillips, Anne. *The Politics of Presence*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1995.

Pickle, Linda Schelbitzki. *Contented among Strangers: Rural German-Speaking Women and Their Families in the Nineteenth-Century Midwest*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996.

Pillsbury, Richard. *No Foreign Food: The American Diet in Time and Place*. Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, 1998.

Pitkin, Hanna, ed. *Representation*. New York: Atherton Press, 1969.

Pitkin, Hanna. *The Concept of Representation*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967.

Poe, Tracy. “The Labour and Leisure of Food Production as a Mode of Ethnic Identity Building among Italians in Chicago, 1890 – 1940.” *Rethinking History* 5 (2001): 131-148.

Przeworski, Adam, et al., ed. *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Rahn, Millie. "Laying a Place at the Table: Creating Public Foodways Models from Scratch." *Journal of American Folklore* 119 (2006): 30-46.

Rao, M. S. A. "Conservatism and Change in Food Habits among the Migrants in India: A Study in Gastrodynamics," in *Food, Society, and Culture*, edited by R. S. Khare and M. S. A. Rao. Durham, N. C.: Carolina Academic Press, 1986.

Rao, Nirmala. "The Changing Context of Representation," in *Representation and Community in Western Democracies*, edited by Rao. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.

Raspa, Richard. "Exotic Foods among Italian-Americans in Mormon Utah: Food as Nostalgic Enactment of Identity," in *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States: The Performance of Group Identity*, edited by L. K. Brown and K. Mussell, 185-194. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984.

Ray, Krishnendu. *The Migrant's Table: Meals and Memories in Bengali-American Households*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004.

Riippa, Timo. "The Finns and Swede-Finns," in *They Chose Minnesota: A Survey of the State's Ethnic Groups*, edited by June Holmquist. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1981.

Riney-Kehrberg, Pamela. "New Directions in Rural History." *Agricultural History* 81 (2007): 155-158.

Robinson, Elwyn B. *History of North Dakota*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966.

Rodriguez-Alegria, Enrique. "Eating like an Indian: Social Relations in the Spanish Colonies." *Current Anthropology* 46 (2005): 551-573.

Roediger, David. *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*. New York: Verso, 1991.

Roosens, Eugene E. *Creating Ethnicity: The Process of Ethnogenesis*. Newbury Park, Cal.: Sage, 1989.

Rose, Peter G. *The Sensible Cook: Dutch Foodways in the Old and the New World*. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1989.

Rössler, Horst. "Massenexodus: die Neue Welt des 19. Jahrhunderts," in *Deutsche im Ausland – Fremde in Deutschland: Migration in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. Munich: C.

H. Beck, 1993.

Rozin, Paul. "Sociocultural Influences on Human Food Selection," in *Why We Eat What We Eat: The Psychology of Eating*, edited by Elizabeth D. Capaldi. Washington, D. C.:

American Psychological Association, 1996, 233-263.

Saarinen, Thomas F. "The Use of Projective Techniques in Geographic Research," in *Environment and Cognition*, ed. William H. Ittelson, 29-52. New York: Seminar Press,

1973.

Saloutos, Theodore. "The Immigrant Contribution to American Agriculture," in *Agricultural History* 50 (1976):

Sandgruber, Roman. "Nutrition in Austria in the Industrial Age," in *European Food History: A Research Review*, edited by Hans J. Teuterberg, 146-167. New York:

Leicester University Press, 1992.

Schersten, Albert F. *The Relation of the Swedish-American Newspaper to the Assimilation of Swedish Immigrants*. Rock Island, Ill.: Augustana Library Publications,

1935.



Schönemann, Bernd. "Vom Westfälischen Frieden bis zum Wiener Kongress," under the entry "Volk, Nation, Nationalismus, Masse," in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexicon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, edited by Otto Brunner et al., vol. 7. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1992.

Scott, James. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998.

Sell, James L., et al., "Toward a Theoretical Framework for Landscape Perception," in *Environmental Perception and Behavior: An Inventory and Prospect*, edited by Thomas F. Saarinen et al, 61-83. Chicago: University of Chicago Department of Geography Research Paper no. 209, 1984.

Senda, M. "Japan's Traditional View of Nature and Interpretation of Landscape," in *Nature and Identity in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, edited by A. Buttner & L. Wallin, 51-61. Boston, Mass.: Kluwer, 1999.

Shepard, Paul. *Man in the Landscape: A Historic View of the Esthetics of Nature*. New York: Knopf, 1967.

Sherman, William. *Prairie Mosaic: An Ethnic Atlas of Rural North Dakota*. Fargo: North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, 1983.

Short, John R. *Imagined Country: Environment, Culture and Society*. New York: Routledge, 1991.

Shortridge, James R. *The Middle West: Its Meaning in American Culture*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989.

Simmel, Georg. "The Sociology of the Meal." *Food & Foodways* 5 (1994 [1910]): 345-350.

Simmons, I. G. *Interpreting Nature: Cultural Constructions of the Environment*. New York: Routledge, 1993.

Skårdal, Dorothy Burton. *The Divided Heart: Scandinavian Immigrant Experience through Literary Sources*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1974.

Smith, Anthony D. *Chosen Peoples*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Smith, Anthony D. *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. New York: Blackwell, 1986.

Smith, John L. *The Psychology of Food and Eating: A Fresh Approach to Theory and Method*. New York: Palgrave, 2002.

Sonnenfeld, Joseph. "Multidimensional Measurement of Environmental Personality," in *Spatial Choice and Spatial Behavior: Geographic Essays on the Analysis of Preferences and Perceptions*, edited by R. Golledge & G. Rushton. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1976.

Stein, Aryeh D., et al., "Migration to the United States and Dietary Change among Polish Women," presented at the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology meeting, San Diego, Apr. 11-15, 2003, FASEB Journal 17 (2003): Abstract No. 690.16.

Stewart, Mort A. *"What Nature Suffers to Groe:" Life, Labor, and Landscape on the Georgia Coast, 1680 – 1920*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996.

Swierenga, Robert. *Faith and Family. Dutch Immigration and Settlement in the United States, 1820 – 1920*. New York: Holmes & Meier, 2000.

Swierenga, Robert. "Ethnicity and American Agriculture." *Ohio History* 89 (1980).

Teuterberg, H. J. "The Diet as an Object of Historical Analysis in Germany," in *European Food History: A Research Review*, edited by Hans J. Teuterberg, 109-128. New York: Leicester University Press, 1992.

Teuterberg, H. J. "The General Relationship between Diet and Industrialization," in *European Diet from Pre-Industrial to Modern Times*, edited by Elborg Forster and Robert Forster, 61-109. New York: Harper & Row, 1975.

Thacker, Christopher. *The Wildness Pleases: The Origins of Romanticism*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983.

Thacker, Robert. *The Great Prairie Fact and Literary Imagination*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989.

Thernstrom, Stephan. *The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880 – 1970*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973.

Tocqueville, Alexis de. *Democracy in America, and Two Essays on America*, trans. Gerald Bevan. New York: Penguin, 2003.

Todorov, Tzvetan. *Theories of the Symbol*. Translated by Catherine Porter. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1982.

Tuan, Yi-Fu. "Geopietty: A Theme in Man's Attachment to Nature and to Place," in *Geographies of the Mind: Essays in Historical Geography*, edited by D. Lowenthal & M. J. Bowden, 11-39. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Tucker, John A. "Japanese Views of Nature and the Environment," in *Nature Across Cultures: Views of Nature and the Environment in Non-Western Cultures*, edited by Helaine Selin, 161-183. Boston, Mass.: Kluwer Academic, 2003.

Ulrich, Roger. "Aesthetic and Affective Response to Natural Environment," in *Behavior and the Natural Environment*, edited by I. Altman & J. Wohlwill, 85-125. New York: Plenum Press, 1983.

Vecoli, Rudolph J. "Contadini in Chicago: A Critique of *The Uprooted*," in *Journal of American History* 51 (1964): 404-417.

Walker, Mack. *Germany and the Emigration, 1816 – 1885*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964.

Warren, Charles. "Wilderness," in *Patterned Ground: Entanglements of Nature and Culture*, edited by Stephan Harrison et al., 139-141. London: Reaktion Books, 2004.

Wiebe, Robert H. *The Opening of American Society: From the Adoption of the Constitution to the Eve of Disunion*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984.

Wilkins, Robert P. "Alexander McKenxie and the Politics of Bossism," in *The North Dakota Political Tradition*, edited by Thomas Howard, 3-39. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1981.

Wilkins, R. P., and W. H. Wilkins, *North Dakota: A Bicentennial History*. New York: Norton, 1977.

Williams, Brett. "Why Migrant Women Feed Their Husbands Tamales: Foodways as a Basis for a Revisionist View of Tejano Family Life," in *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States: The Performance of Group Identity*, edited by L. K. Brown and K. Mussell, 113-126. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984.

Williams, Susan. *Food in the United States, 1820s – 1900*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2006.

Withers, Charles. "Contested Visions: Nature, Culture, and the Morality of Landscape in the Scottish Highlands," in *Nature and Identity in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, edited by A. Buttner & L. Wallin, 271-286. Boston, Mass.: Kluwer, 1999.

Wohlwill, Joachim. "The Concept of Nature: A Psychologist's View," in *Behavior and the Natural Environment*, edited by I. Altman & J. Wohlwill, 5-37. New York: Plenum Press, 1983.

Zimmer, Oliver. "In Search of Natural Identity: Alpine Landscape and the Reconstruction of the Swiss Nation," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40 (1998): 637-665.

Zube, Ervin. "Landscape Research: Planned and Serendipitous," in *Environment and Behavior Studies: Emergence of Intellectual Traditions*, edited by I Altman and K. Christensen, 291-313. New York: Plenum Press, 1990.